MAP OF WEST AFRICA

to illustrate

THE ROMANCE OF THE BLACK RIVER

Showing the whole course of the Niger and the principal places mentioned in the book

"THERE FLOWED A GREAT RIVER RUNNING FROM WEST TO EAST"
(See page 8)

By courtesy of the Crown Agents for the Colonies

THE ROMANCE OF THE BLACK RIVER

The Story of the C.M.S. Nigeria Mission

By

F. DEAVILLE WALKER

Author of

Thomas Birch Freeman : The Son of an African ;
Africa and her Peoples, etc.

With a Foreword

by the

REV. W. WILSON CASH

General Secretary, C.M.S.

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Salisbury Square, London, E.C. 4

1930

M 2813478

LONDON
PUBLIC

Made *and* printed *in* Great Britain
By The Camelot Press Ltd
London *and* Southampton

TO ALL

THE DEVOTED WORKERS

OF THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN,

WHO HAVE LABOURED

FOR THE

EVANGELIZATION OF NIGERIA,

I DEDICATE

THIS BOOK

FOREWORD

THE penetration of Africa by the explorer has been succeeded by the opening up of the dark continent to all the impacts of western commerce, civilization, and education. In Nigeria these changes have inaugurated for good or ill a new era which is rapidly shaping the destiny of this great tract of Africa.

The Church Missionary Society has carried on its work in Nigeria from the days of the earlier pioneers until now when there is a virile, growing, native Church, self-supporting and self-extending. The time has therefore fully come for the issue of a historical account of a mission whose story must rank as one of the great romances of missionary enterprise, an epic of the work of the C.M.S. in West Africa.

We are grateful to Mr. Deaville Walker for accepting the invitation to write this book. His extensive personal knowledge of the territory has enabled him to write with the experience of an eye-witness, and his long study of the history of the progress of Christianity in West Africa has given to him a statesmanlike survey of the immense problems confronting the young Church there.

In publishing *The Romance of the Black River*, with its vivid portrayal of the devotion, enthusiasm, and indomitable zeal of some of the men and women who have served the cause of Christ in

Nigeria, the C.M.S. offers to its supporters and friends an account of its stewardship, covering a long period of years, in one of its African fields. The facts speak for themselves. The book is sent out in the hope that it will inspire many readers to further self-sacrifice and service in the great unfinished task.

W. Wilson Cash

September, 1930

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book is not intended to be complete as history ; still less is it a treatise for advanced students of missionary problems and policy. It is rather an attempt to give, for the help of the general reader, a panoramic view of the Nigeria Mission of the C.M.S. from its beginning to the present day. From time to time books have been published dealing with sections of the work, as for instance Miss Tucker's *Abeokuta* published in 1853, *Seventeen Years in the Yoruba Country* published in 1872, right down to *Round about Panyam* published in 1921. Then there have been such biographies as those of Henry Townsend and Bishop Crowther ; and all along numerous articles in the C.M.S. magazines. But no attempt has hitherto been made to tell in brief, bold outline the whole story of the work in that group of countries represented by the one word " Nigeria." To do so is the aim of this volume. Moreover, the book seeks to present the work of the Mission in its true setting and in relation to those other influences that have concurrently been brought to bear upon the land and its peoples. The story begins with vast stretches of country unexplored, and multitudes of people living in darkness and misery, subject to almost continual inter-tribal warfare, and everywhere the worst horrors of slavery. In the changes that have come, in the

transformation that has been wrought, missionary work has been only one factor, but an important one ; and while dealing particularly with missionary effort, the book attempts to present it in relation to those other factors – explorations and discovery, the spread of European influence and commerce, and, above all, of sound government under British administration.

Limitations of space have compelled the omission of many things that might fittingly have been dealt with ; and it has not been possible even to refer to many heroic missionaries and African workers who have laboured for the uplifting of the Nigerian peoples. The sins of omission are many, but it is hoped that errors as to facts will be found to be correspondingly few. There has been no attempt at originality ; that indeed is almost impossible, for in writing such a book it has been necessary to draw largely upon the work of others. To all such, past and present, the writer gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness. Very specially he acknowledges the great kindness of Bishop Tugwell (so long Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa), the Bishop of Lagos, and the Bishop on the Niger in reading the typescript and enriching the book with valuable suggestions ; the Rt. Rev. A. W. Smith for help in connexion with Northern Nigeria, and the Rev. H. D. Hooper, C.M.S. secretary for the African group of Missions, who has lately visited Nigeria.

F. Deaville Walker

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I

THE CRY OF THE SLAVES

1821 – 1837

ONE evening in the spring of 1822, two British men-of-war were cruising along the low, palm-fringed shores of the Gulf of Guinea. They belonged to the patrol squadron charged with the suppression of slave running. Their task was far from easy, for the lightly-built slave ships lay hid among the unexplored creeks and inlets of the Bight of Benin, watching an opportunity to ply their inhuman traffic ; then, "when the coast was clear," they bore swiftly down upon a place where a consignment of slaves was in readiness, shipped them in a few hours, spread their sails, and made for Brazil or Cuba. But they did not always succeed in evading the vigilance of His Britannic Majesty's Navy ; numbers were captured and their living cargoes liberated. It was so on the day our story opens.

That April evening, as H.M.Ss. *Myrmidon* and *Iphigenia* cruised slowly along the coast, the officers of the watch detected a suspicious-looking vessel on the eastern horizon, her white sails catching the light of the setting sun. Instantly the course of the warships was set in that direction, and all doubt as to the character of the strange vessel was soon removed, for, on sighting the men-of-war, she turned

upon her track, and fled in the direction from which she had come. Unable to escape to the open sea, she sought in the twilight to evade her pursuers by entering a lagoon, that upon which Lagos[1] stands. But the keen eye of Captain H. G. Leeke detected this manœuvre ; throughout the night his ships kept watch off the bar, and at daybreak he entered the lagoon and pounced upon his prey.

The slaver turned out to be a Portuguese vessel, with a cargo of 187 captives, shipped on the previous day from Lagos beach. She had only been at sea a few hours when the men-of-war sighted her. Her captain was soon in irons, and her living cargo liberated. But the captives did not realize the significance of what had happened. In their ignorance, they thought that they had but exchanged one set of masters for another. On being transferred to the British ships they were filled with fear, for the Portuguese had told them that the English only seized slave ships in order to use the blood of the Negroes to dye their scarlet cloth and their flesh as baits for cowrie fishing. To their terrified imagination, the cannon balls piled on the decks seemed to be the heads of their fellow countrymen, and they mistook for human limbs some joints of pork hanging up to dry. But being allowed to wander freely about the ship they soon discovered their

[1] The native name was Eko. It is a Benin word meaning "shed." Originally it appears to have been a place where Benin fishermen built their sheds. The Yorubas called it Agô. The name Lagos, given by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, was only used by Europeans.

mistake ; the cannon balls were found to be made of iron, and the cloven feet revealed the true identity of the drying flesh. Slowly the captives discovered that they were FREE ! In the first flush of liberty one boy stepped up to the Portuguese captain, now in fetters, and struck him on the head. That boy's name was Adjai. We shall hear more of him as our story unfolds.

. . . . . .

Behind the incident just narrated was a story of tragedy and bitterness that was characteristic of the times.

Far away in the vast forests of the Yoruba Country, in the Lagos hinterland, was the town of Oshogun, one of the many in that (for Africa) thickly-populated land. Its walls of earth and palisades, defended by a deep moat, were four miles in circumference and its population was estimated to have been at least 12,000. One morning, in the early spring of 1821, the people had risen as usual at daybreak. All seemed to be peace and security ; from the compounds there rose the sounds of the women pounding yams for the morning meal, and the men were preparing to follow their occupation. Just then the cry was raised : " The Mohammedans are upon us ! " and in an instant all was confusion. The men seized their weapons and flew to the walls, but the 3000 they could muster were not enough to hold so long a line of defences. For three or four hours they maintained a stout resistance, but while holding the enemy in check at one point, another

party forced an undefended gate and took the town in the rear.

Terrible was the scene that followed. The fierce hand-to-hand fighting in the streets, and the cries of the defenders calling to their women to fly to the forest, the fire that spread rapidly from hut to hut: all was war and carnage. As women, with babies tied to their backs and children holding on to their cloths, attempted to leave the town they were caught by cords thrown over their heads and tied together by the necks like so many goats. The boy Adjai has left on record for us a tragic narrative of that terrible day. His father had given the signal to flee, and the mother with her children made a vain attempt to do so. They were captured before they reached the wall, and as the flames rose high they were led away captive with a sorrowing crowd of their fellow townsfolk. Old people who could not walk quickly enough were threatened with instant death unless they kept pace with the others, and some were actually struck down and killed on the spot.

Then came the division of the captives between the conquerors. Adjai was separated from his mother and sister ; he was exchanged for a horse, and in a space of twenty-four hours was the property of three different people. For months he was moved from place to place and from one owner to another, until at last he was taken down to Lagos. There he was sold, with others, to the Portuguese slave dealers, who chained them together by the necks and shipped them from what is now Victoria Beach,

where the white surf of the Atlantic breaks ceaselessly upon the coast of Guinea just beside the entrance to the lagoon. They had only been a few hours at sea when H.M.Ss. *Myrmidon* and *Iphigenia* hove in sight, and the slaver fled back to Lagos lagoon for shelter, only to be captured at daybreak. After all he had suffered, can we wonder at the bitter vengeance that welled up in the heathen heart of Adjai and vented itself upon the now captive captain of the slave ship ?

That tragedy of Oshogun was one of common occurrence in the West Africa of those days ; towns and villages were raided and left as heaps of burning ruins ; thousands of human beings lay dead among the debris, and thousands more were led away into cruel slavery.

Leaving Lagos, then a sink of iniquity and a stronghold of the Portuguese slave traffic, Captain Leeke sailed away westward, till in mid-June he cast anchor off Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he landed the slaves he had rescued. There Adjai again set foot on African soil, *free*. He was placed in a C.M.S. school, and in him the Church Missionary Society had its first important link with the great land now known as Nigeria. Little more than three years later, Adjai received holy baptism and took the name by which he became known throughout the world, Samuel Adjai Crowther.

. . . . . .

Can we wonder that the great heart of England responded to the cry of Africa ? After more than

two centuries of shameful participation in the slave trade, the national conscience, stirred by the Evangelical Revival, awakened to the enormities of the inhuman traffic. In 1807, after a fierce struggle in the House of Commons, the first great victory was won, and Parliament abolished the slave trade so far as her subjects were concerned.[1] France took a similar step in 1814. The British cruisers were stationed along the coast of Africa to give effect to the prohibition. The usual practice was to take the captured slave ships to Sierra Leone, and, having freed the slaves in a sheltered cove just east of Freetown, the vessels were burned. That cove came to be known as Destruction Bay.

But the traffic was too profitable to be lightly relinquished by those engaged in it. The risks of capture by British cruisers increased the value of a cargo successfully run across the Atlantic. In those days, along the 2600 miles of coast, from Cape Verde to the mouths of the Niger, there were nearly seventy ports from which slaves were shipped more or less frequently, and every year tens of thousands of captives were carried across to the Americas. So late as 1839 Lord John Russell wrote :—

> I find it impossible to avoid the conclusion that the average number of slaves introduced into America and the West Indies from the western coasts of Africa annually exceeds one hundred thousand, and this estimate affords but a very imperfect indication

[1] The Act of 1807 only abolished the *trade*; it did not give liberty to the people in bondage. Not until 1834 was the emancipation of slaves in British colonies accomplished.

of the real extent of the calamities which this traffic inflicts upon its victims. No record exists of the multitudes who perish in the overland journey to the African coast, or in the passage across the Atlantic, or the still greater number who fall a sacrifice to the warfare, pillage, and cruelties by which the slave trade is fed. The whole involves a waste of human life and a state of human misery, proceeding from year to year without respite or intermission.

So rampant was this overseas slave traffic, that there were times when its suppression seemed hopeless and the British cruisers appeared to make little headway. That they had real success is evident from the fact that in the three years 1835, 1836, and 1837, no fewer than 13,000 freed slaves were landed in Freetown ; but even that result seemed small in comparison with the scores of thousands who were not fortunate enough to be rescued.

Then England took another step. In 1836 she attempted to buy Portugal and Spain out of the traffic, giving to the former £300,000 and to the latter £400,000 on condition that they would prohibit the unholy work. Unfortunately, for many years these bargains were not faithfully kept ; the planters of Brazil and Cuba and even of the United States, still demanded slaves, and men in hope of gain were prepared to take the risks of supplying them.

II

THE DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT BLACK RIVER

1788 – 1832

WHILE Crowther was a boy in his village home and a youth growing to manhood in Freetown, a new interest in West Africa was steadily growing in Great Britain, the interest in the great Black River, the mighty Niger. For over 2000 years that river had been veiled in mystery. So early as the fifth century B.C. Herodotus heard how five young men had journeyed westward from Egypt and for many days crossed the desert until they came to a land of fruit trees. After passing "through vast morasses," they reached a city "and by the city there flowed a great river running *from west to east.*" (*Euterpe*, 32.) It was not until the close of the eighteenth century that real interest began to be aroused in this statement; but in 1788 a company of men of letters and science formed the "African Association" with the express object of finding the Niger. In those days geographers were of opinion that either the Gambia or the Senegal must be the mouth of the great river of ancient tradition, and that Herodotus had been misinformed as to its flowing *from west to east.*

The early efforts of the newly-formed Association met with no real success. Their first agent, Ledyard,

was sent to Egypt with instructions to follow up the clues supplied by Herodotus ; others tried to penetrate into the vast unknown from Tripoli, from Sierra Leone, and up the Gambia. One or two of these pioneers heard rumours of a great river far away in the interior, but its whereabouts and its outlet were as mysterious as ever.

In 1795 a young Scottish surgeon, Mungo Park, started on the great quest. The Association directed him to proceed up the Gambia, and search for the Niger in the vast regions beyond. With amazing courage and determination Park faced almost incredible difficulties. Riding on a horse, and attended only by two African servants, he plunged into the Dark Continent. Two fowling-pieces and a brace of pistols were the only weapons for the whole party. Time after time they were attacked and plundered. Chiefs, great and small, demanded " dashes," and one rapacious fellow compelled Park to give him the very coat off his back. But the explorer's good temper and patience never failed, not even when the bigoted Ludamar Moors made him their prisoner, spat in his face, and subjected him to every indignity they could devise. When he sought to quench his burning thirst, they drove him like a dog from their wells though there was no lack of water. He used to fall asleep and dream of the rivers of his Scottish homeland, and then awake to find himself perishing for thirst in the wilds of Africa.

After four months of humiliating captivity, he

managed to escape, and once more set out on his quest. He was alone now, for one of his African servants had deserted and the other had been carried into slavery. As he toiled on from village to village he was so dirty and ragged that the people jeered at him. But as he journeyed he heard more and more of a great river that lay beyond, and he found that each day was bringing him nearer to his goal. One joyful day (July 21, 1797) he reached the town of Sego and was told that on the morrow he would see the river he had suffered so much to reach. That night excitement banished sleep, and next morning he rode forward. The supreme moment had come. We must let him tell his own story :—

> We rode forward through some marshy ground, where, as I was anxiously looking round for the river, one of them called out : " See ! the water ! " and looking forward I saw with infinite pleasure the great object of my mission, the long sought for, majestic Niger, glittering in the morning sun, as broad as the Thames at Westminster, flowing slowly *to the eastward*. I hastened to the brink, and, having drunk of the water, lifted up my fervent thanks in prayer to the great Ruler of all things for having thus far crowned my endeavours with success. (*Travels*, vol. I, ch. xv.)

So Herodotus was right : there was in the heart of West Africa a mighty river, and it flowed *from west to east*. To follow its course would have been to risk death and the knowledge of his discovery would perish with him. Park, therefore, made his way back to the coast to give the world the information he had gained.

In 1805 Park went out again hoping to complete his work. The expedition was equipped by the

British Government, and when he once more set out from the Gambia he had with him seven European companions and thirty-seven English soldiers and sailors. His purpose was to strike the Niger and sail down it till he reached its mouth, wherever it might be. Park himself believed it to be the Congo, and he was eager to test his theory. But so great were the hardships of the journey that of the forty-five white men who set out, only seven lived to see the Niger. Soon the number was reduced to four, and one of them was mad.

On reaching the river, a boat (styled H.M.S. *Joliba*) was constructed from native canoes and Park began his voyage down the mighty river, not knowing where it might lead. There were people who believed that it would be found to end in a morass in some great desert, and if it were so the whole party might perish. But Park did not hesitate. Time after time his boat was attacked by fleets of canoes and it was necessary to maintain a running fight. On they journeyed for a thousand miles. Then the end came with tragic swiftness. Passing between the deep, narrow gorge near Bussa, where the river rushes furiously between islets and dangerous rocks, the *Joliba* was assailed with spears, arrows, and stones. The boat struck a submerged rock ; Park and his companions jumped into the water and disappeared for ever.

The course of the great Black River was still a mystery. Other men took up the quest : Hornemann set out from Cairo, Roentgen from Morocco,

and Nichols from Calabar. Then the British Government sent out simultaneously two expeditions, one to finish Park's journey down the river, and the other up the Congo. It was hoped that the two expeditions would meet somewhere in the interior, but instead both ended in tragic failure. In 1821, the year Crowther was enslaved, Clapperton and Denham, starting from Tripoli, crossed the Sahara Desert, explored the regions around Lake Chad, discovered the great cities of Kano and Sokoto and proved that the Niger was *not* a tributary of the Nile, as some had supposed. It was not until 1830, eight years after Crowther reached Freetown, that the brothers Richard and John Lander journeyed overland from Badagry, near Lagos, reached Bussa, and completed the perilous river-journey that had cost Mungo Park his life. On November 23, 1830, they reached the mouth of the river and the age-long mystery was solved. Till that moment no one had thought that the numerous streams flowing through the mangrove swamps in the Bight of Benin could possibly be the mouths of the mighty Niger.

The Landers' discovery was speedily seen to be of far-reaching importance. It was recognized that a great highway had been opened into the interior of Africa, and British commerce was not slow to take advantage of it. Foremost among those who saw in the Niger a highway for commerce was a Scottish merchant, Macgregor Laird, who in 1832 organized a trading expedition up the river.

His objects were not merely mercantile; he believed that permanent moral results would be achieved by taking advantage of the trading instincts of the Negro peoples, and that honest trade would help to oust the slave traffic. He and many other like-minded people held that the spread of British commerce and civilization were necessary steps towards the uplift of Africa.

III

WITH THE NIGER EXPEDITION OF 1841

ON June 1, 1840, there was held in the Exeter Hall, London, one of the most momentous gatherings that ever met in that famous building. In the chair was the Prince Consort, Albert of Saxe-Coburg, who only four months before had married the young Queen Victoria. Around him on the platform sat some twenty-five peers and bishops and a crowd of Members of Parliament and other influential persons. Among the people who thronged the hall there sat a young Scottish medical student, then unknown, David Livingstone. A silence fell upon the crowded audience when the Prince Consort rose to make his first public speech in England. In it he said :—

> I have been induced to preside at this meeting . . . from a conviction of its paramount importance to the great interests of humanity and justice. I deeply regret that the benevolent and persevering exertions of England to abolish the atrocious traffic in human beings – at once the desolation of Africa and the blackest stain on civilized Europe – have not as yet led to a satisfactory conclusion. I sincerely trust that this great country will not relax its efforts until it has, finally and for ever, put an end to a state of things so repugnant to the principles of Christianity and to the best feelings of our nature. I do trust that Providence will prosper our exertions in so holy a cause ; and that, under the auspices of our Queen and her Government, we may, at no distant period, be rewarded by the accomplishment of the great and humane object, for the promotion of which we have met this day.

Thomas Fowell Buxton moved the first resolution, and he was followed by Samuel Wilberforce

(son of the great emancipator), Sir Robert Peel, the Bishops of Winchester and Chichester, the Earl of Chichester (then President of the Church Missionary Society), the Marquis of Northampton, and several others.

What object had drawn together such a distinguished assembly? It was none other than that which for more than a generation had been steadily winning the allegiance of freedom-loving Britishers – the overthrow of the slave traffic. In spite of the Emancipation Act of 1834, the agreements with Spain and Portugal in 1836, and the vigilance of British cruisers along the coast, the iniquitous traffic was still going on. Moreover the exploration of the Niger had shown that in the interior, the African chiefs were continually raiding for slaves, both for themselves and for sale to the white men. The anti-slavery leaders in England had begun to realize that naval and other efforts along the coast were not enough; something must be done to deal with the up-country chiefs and kings; pressure must be brought to bear upon them *to stop the supply of slaves at its source.* Many clear brains were thinking out this problem; and then, early one morning in 1837 (a few weeks before the accession of Queen Victoria), Fowell Buxton burst into the bedroom of one of his sons and roused him, saying that he had passed a sleepless night thinking about the slave traffic, and had hit upon the true remedy: "The deliverance of Africa is to be affected by calling out her own resources." His stirring book:

The Slave Trade and its Remedy, was one of the first results.

In brief outline, Buxton's plan was this: (1) Strengthen the patrol squadron along the African coast; (2) negotiate with the kings and chiefs, both near the shore and in the interior, and if possible make treaties with them; (3) utilize the newly-discovered Niger as a highway into the very heart of the country and so get in behind the great slave-raiding tribes of Dahomey, Yoruba, and Ibo. To carry out this great purpose, Buxton urged the co-operation of all available forces, Government, the commercial companies, and the missionary societies; each had an important part to play, a contribution to make to the great effort. "The Bible and the plough must regenerate Africa," he said.

As a result, a "Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilization of Africa" was formed, and it was remarkable how it appealed to men of widely different religious and political convictions. Buxton himself described it as "quite an epitome of the State: Whig, Tory, and Radical; Dissenter, Low Church, High Church, tip-top Oxfordism, all united!" One of the first to join was the rising young statesman William Ewart Gladstone. Government took up the matter. Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord John Russell, the Colonial Secretary, threw themselves into the scheme for a well-equipped Niger Expedition. Men of science helped with advice, and

business men gave money. Government built three new iron steamships specially for the purpose, the *Albert*, the *Wilberforce*, and the *Sudan*, and a fund of £4000 was raised to found a model agricultural farm on the Niger. The government view of the undertaking was set forth in a letter from Lord John Russell, from which the following is extracted : —

Her Majesty's Confidential Advisers are compelled to admit the conviction that it is indispensable to enter upon some new preventive system, calculated to arrest the Foreign Slave Trade in its source. . . . Although it may be impossible to check the cupidity of those who purchase slaves . . . it may yet be possible to force on those by whom they are sold, the persuasion that they are engaged in a traffic opposed to their own interests. . . .

With this in view, it is proposed to establish new commercial relations with those African Chiefs within whose dominions the internal slave trade is carried on. To this end, the Queen has directed her Ministers to negotiate conventions or agreements with those Chiefs and Powers; the basis of which would be, 1st, The abandonment and absolute prohibition of the slave trade; and 2ndly, The admission for consumption in this country, on favourable terms, of goods, the produce and manufacture of the territories subject to them. Of these Chiefs, the most considerable rule over the countries adjacent to the Niger and its great tributary streams. It is therefore proposed to dispatch an Expedition, which would ascend that river. . . . It is proposed to establish British factories, in the hope that the Natives may be taught that there are methods of employing the population more profitable . . . than that of converting them into slaves, and selling them for exportation. . . .

Having maturely weighed these questions, and with a full perception of the difficulties which may attend this undertaking, the Ministers of the Crown are yet convinced that it affords the best, if not the only prospect of accomplishing the great object so earnestly desired by the Queen, by her Parliament, and her People.

Every care was taken to insure that the expedition

should be carried out on the highest possible lines, and the personnel were most carefully chosen. The command was placed in the hands of Captain Trotter (*Albert*), Captain William Allen (*Wilberforce*), and Captain Bird Allen (*Sudan*) ; and these three, together with Captain Cork, were appointed Her Majesty's Commissioners for the control of the undertaking. These Commissioners and most, if not all, the officers were Christian men ; the crews, too, were chosen for their moral character as well as for their seamanship. A chaplain was appointed, and there were to be constant prayers on board each ship for the success of the enterprise.

From the beginning, the C.M.S. was in close touch with the expedition. Buxton had urged that Christian missions had their part to play in the redemption of Africa, and the Committee felt that the Niger must be claimed as a highway for the Gospel. Missions, as well as government posts and trading stations, must be opened along the great river ; and when the Society asked to be allowed to send two carefully-chosen representatives with the expedition permission was readily given. The Committee's choice fell upon two men then in Sierra Leone. One was the Rev. J. F. Schön, a missionary of eight years' experience, a linguist and diligent student of things African ; the other was a young African lay teacher, Samuel Adjai Crowther.

. . . . . .

Quite naturally, there were people in England

who strongly opposed the whole scheme of the Niger Expedition. Such influential papers as *The Times* and the *Edinburgh Review* attacked it with bitterness and persistence. But its promoters were unmoved and went forward with their preparations. Prince Albert continued his warm support, and visited the vessels as they lay in the Thames before sailing.

On April 14, 1841, the three vessels sailed from England. In ten weeks they reached Sierra Leone.[1] The people of Freetown, practically all of them freed slaves or the children of slaves, had long known of the proposed expedition and great was the excitement when the long-looked-for squadron cast anchor in the river. Schön and Crowther helped to secure interpreters for the expedition, and from the rescued slaves chose a dozen men whose mother-tongues were those of the Niger tribes or the surrounding nations, Ibo, Yoruba, Eggarra, Kakanda, Hausa, Bornoa, Laruba, and Fula. Crowther's own tongue was Yoruba, and Schön had some knowledge of Ibo and Hausa. Many of the Sierra Leone people were eager to accompany the expedition as seamen, labourers, or anything else, and a number were chosen. Special services were held in the Freetown churches, and a prayer meeting in the principal church was attended and addressed by the captains of the fleet. They sailed on July 2.

It was not until August 15 that the expedition crossed the bar of the River Nun, the most important mouth of the Niger, the sailors cheering

[1] To-day the voyage takes ten days!

as they did so. The last preparations were made, pilots taken on board, and on August 20 the ships weighed anchor and headed up stream, but not before special prayer had, by order of the Commander of the expedition, been offered on each vessel. One prayer (composed for the occasion by the chaplain) contained these words :—

> Give success to our endeavours to introduce civilization and Christianity into this benighted country. Thou hast promised, *Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God* : make us, we pray Thee, instruments in fulfilling this Thy promise.

The time for proceeding up the Niger had been carefully chosen so that the river would be in flood, and therefore there would be less risk of sandbanks and other obstacles. It was also believed that that would be the least trying time for Europeans from the point of view of health.

Slowly and with great caution the vessels steamed up the narrow channels, past mangrove swamps, and then into more beautiful forest-fringed reaches. Here and there were cultivated patches with banana plantations, fields of yams and sugar cane, and then the primeval forest again. Occasionally a village was reached, the ships stopped, and an interpreter tried to get into conversation with the people, many of whom came in their dug-out canoes to gaze at the terrifying monsters that had come so suddenly upon them. Often the people were afraid to come too near, and it was not easy to convince them that the English were their friends, the only white men known in those places being the Portuguese slave

traders. "There can be no doubt that there is much traffic in slaves carried on in this region," wrote Schön. "We have had such proofs of it as cannot be contradicted." He found that some of the river-side chiefs were unquestionably in the habit of carrying out raids upon their neighbours and sending their captives down stream to the coast for shipment.

Conversing with one chief, Schön asked if he was glad to have such a visit from white men, and got the surprising reply: "These three months we have been praying to God to send white man's ship." For a moment the missionary felt pleased; then it dawned on him that what the chief desired and prayed for was the ship of a slave trader to whom he might sell slaves! One of the interpreters on the *Albert* recognized the very village where he had spent several years in captivity and actually came across a man whom he knew. The astonishment was mutual, the more so because the villagers were under the impression that the slaves sent down to the sea were killed and eaten by white men; and to see one return, after an interval of years, dressed as a white man and living as white men live, was almost beyond credence. "If God Himself had told me this, I could not have believed it. But now I see it with my own eyes," said one. The very idea of white men who were *not* engaged in the slave trade was new to many of the riverside people.

The programme of the expedition especially related to three outstanding chiefs of great importance, in fact, kings. These were the Obi of the Ibo

people, who dwelt at Abo on the western bank of the Niger ; the Atta of the Egarra, at Idda on the east bank ; and the King of Rabba, in the Nupé Country some 500 miles from the sea.

When the first of these places was reached, Simon Jonas, the Ibo interpreter, went ashore to explain the visit to the Obi. When this potentate heard of the suppression of slavery he hesitated and said : "This is a hard thing!" But he was persuaded to go aboard the *Albert*, and there the Commissioners explained fully the proposed treaty. Whether or not the Obi fully understood what he was doing may be open to question, but he agreed to put his mark to the document presented to him. Before the treaty was formally signed, it was explained to the chief that it was the custom of Christians to ask the blessing of God before doing anything of importance, and the whole company knelt in prayer. The Obi did as he saw the others doing, but as he knelt there and heard strange words uttered with deep fervour, he became alarmed, supposing that the white men were using incantations against him and his people. Perspiration rolled down his face, and trembling violently from very real fear, he called loudly for his charms. Only with difficulty was his peace of mind restored. The treaty was signed, and then Captain Trotter took the opportunity of speaking to the Obi about the true God. Mr. Schön joined in the conversation, and asked Simon Jonas to read and translate into Ibo the Beatitudes from St. Matthew's Gospel. The

impression they produced upon the Obi was remarkable, and the missionary wrote :—

> That a white man should read and write was a matter of course ; but that a black man, an Ibo, one who had been a slave in times past, should know these wonderful things was more than he could have anticipated. He seized Jonas's hand, squeezed it most heartily, saying : " You must stop with me ; you must teach me and my people ; the white people can go up the river without you. They must leave you here till they come back."

It was arranged that, as soon as the *Albert* had passed beyond the Ibo Country, Jonas, being no longer needed as interpreter, should be sent back to Abo and remain there till the return of the expedition. He thus had the honour of being the first worker of the C.M.S. (or any other mission) to be stationed on the Niger.

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From Abo, the expedition steamed swiftly up the main stream of the mile-wide Niger to Idda, where dwelt the Atta of the Egarra. A deputation, of whom Mr. Schön was one, went ashore to invite the Atta on board the *Albert*, to hear the message from the Queen of England. Though friendly, he refused ; it would be beneath his dignity. " I am a king," he said ; " and a king never puts his foot into a canoe. If the captain of the big English canoe wishes to speak to me he must come ashore." He complained, moreover, that the " dashes " sent to him were not sufficient for his rank, saying that he was like God and the dashes ought to be worthy of him and of God. So, to facilitate good feeling, the

Commissioners with several officers, Mr. Schön, and half a dozen marines as a guard of honour, went ashore to visit the great man in his not very palatial abode. John Duncan, master-at-arms on the *Albert*, an ex-Guardsman, six feet three inches in height, wearing the full uniform of the Life Guards and with a Union Jack in hand, marshalled the party into the presence of the Atta.

The potentate sat upon his royal seat in one of his courtyards, dressed in a red velvet robe and wearing carpet slippers, while bangles round his legs and glass beads round his neck completed his attire. He greatly admired Duncan's glittering helmet with its wonderful plume, and offered to give an elephant's tusk in exchange for it. The palaver proceeded smoothly ; the British proposals were explained as clearly as possible by the interpreter, and from time to time the Atta showed his intelligence and natural shrewdness by making some comment or by asking a question. When the subject of human sacrifice came up, for example, he wanted to know how the prohibition would apply in the event of his country being invaded by another tribe, or if he himself were compelled to make war. In the end, the treaty was accepted by the king and duly signed. Schön formed the opinion that he was an intelligent man and really grasped the meaning of the proposals laid before him ; he even asked if it were possible to send two of his sons to England that they might learn many things from the white man.

Mr. Schön found opportunity to speak to the Atta of the Christian religion, and like the Obi of Abo, the Atta asked that a teacher might be left with him to teach him "English fashion." One thing was becoming quite clear and it was rather a surprise to Mr. Schön, that the Niger kings and chiefs were prepared to listen to an African teacher just as much as to a white man, and were eager to have black teachers.

One very definite step was gained: the Atta agreed to sell to the Commissioners a strip of land on the bank of the river for an English settlement and a model farm. Without loss of time, a suitable site some miles higher up the river, and immediately opposite the confluence with the Tshadda, was taken possession of in the name of Queen Victoria, and a few Europeans and Africans were landed with provisions and implements to make a beginning with the enterprise.

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Trials were beginning to overshadow the expedition. From the first there had been some sickness on the ships, but it had been hoped that this would disappear when the unhealthy reaches of the delta were left behind. It was not to be so. The dangers to health were not understood, nor were the safeguards known. No one thought of attributing malaria to the mosquito; the importance of drinking only water that had been boiled and filtered was unknown; and the Europeans did not protect their heads properly against sunstroke. Tropical fevers

were rife on all the vessels. Soon after leaving Idda there were fifty-five on the sick list, including several officers. Six died in the course of a couple of days, and they were buried on the land so recently acquired for a model farm. Mr. Schön tells us that the *Wilberforce* was "more like a hospital than a man-of-war. Quarter-deck, forecastle, and cabins full of patients." In spite of all the medical officer and his helper could do, the sickness increased. Captain William Allen and Captain Cork were prostrate; and things became so serious that the Commissioners decided that it was necessary for the *Sudan* to return to the sea with the sick men. On September 19, to the intense disappointment of every one, she began her journey down stream. Two days later the *Wilberforce* had to follow her, so great was the number of sick.

In the *Albert*, Captain Trotter and Captain Bird Allen continued the voyage up the river, Schön and Crowther being on board. The renewal of the journey brought new hope to every one. But before nightfall several of the ship's company, including Captain Allen, were feeling unwell, and day by day others were added to the sick list. The vessel was now in the Nupé Country, and Captain Trotter was anxious to fulfil his instructions. On September 28 Egga was reached, the largest and best town they had yet seen. Here they found a slave market. Under one shed fifteen human beings were exposed for sale, and Schön was so stirred that he then and there addressed the people around him

on the sinfulness of slavery in the sight of God.[1] They had reached the country where the influence of Islam was strong, and where slavery was an inter-tribal system, almost entirely without connexion with the white merchants on the far-distant coast.

Captain Trotter was eager to reach Rabba, the last objective of the expedition. But troubles were thickening round him. The river was beginning to fall. Sickness among his officers and crew was increasing. Then he himself was seized with fever and only one officer remained fit to take duty. With great reluctance, the brave commander gave the order to lift anchor and return with all speed to the sea. But before doing so, ill as he was, he sent a message to the King of Rabba telling him of the object of the expedition and accompanied it with a gift of a handsome Arabic Bible.

On October 4 the order to return was given. It was not so easily obeyed. All the engineers and stokers were ill, and for two days and nights it was impossible to get up steam, for no one knew how to do it. The *Albert* just drifted slowly down the river. But Dr. Stranger, a scientist, pored over a book on engineering, to try to discover what should be done, and after a while, with some little aid from one of the engineers who was beginning to recover, he at last managed to get the engines working. There were anxious days and nights ; the water was getting low and shoals and sandbanks became a very

[1] Schön was able to speak in Hausa, which was widely known in that area, and needed but little help from the interpreter.

real peril to a vessel guided by inexperienced hands. The two captains were both dangerously ill, and one day Bird Allen seemed to be dying. Then Mr. Willie, who for some days was the only officer capable of managing the ship, fell ill and died, and Dr. McWilliam, the medical officer, had to act as captain, while Dr. Stranger continued to do his best with the engines. One of the engineers, in his misery, jumped overboard and was drowned. Schön and Crowther looked after the sick and ministered to the dying.

Day by day men were dying as the stricken vessel slowly threaded her way between mudbanks, until on the sixth day from Egga they reached the model farm that had been purchased in such high hopes less than a month before. Several of the Europeans left here were ill and had to be taken aboard. That day, Captain Trotter and Captain Allen were so ill that they said good-bye to one another, expecting to die. Schön was able to arrange for Thomas King, a Sierra Leone schoolmaster, to remain at the place to carry on the good work he had commenced. When Abo was reached the Obi proved his friendship by doing all in his power to relieve the wants of the ship's company, and Simon Jonas reported well concerning the way he had been treated while living there.

By this time only one white sailor remained in health and able to help Dr. McWilliam in navigating the ship. They were still a hundred miles from the mouth of the river, and on reaching it there would be the very serious difficulty of crossing the

bar. But help was forthcoming. The whole company thrilled with the news that a ship was in sight. It was the *Ethiope* coming to their aid. Danger was now past, and two days later the *Albert* crossed the bar in safety. The three ships of the expedition reassembled at Fernando Po, where Captain Bird Allen and several other officers and men died soon after their arrival.

Thus the expedition, sent forth with such lofty purposes and high hopes, ended in tragedy.

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From many points of view, the Niger Expedition was a failure. Its enemies sneered and *The Times* was triumphant. Yet experience was gained that was of value in later efforts. The river was proved to be a great highway, navigable for hundreds of miles ; the riverside peoples were found to be friendly, and there was obviously great opportunity if only the deadly climate could be overcome. Though for the moment discouraged, the promoters of the expedition believed that the failure was not final and they had no thought of giving up the effort, least of all the C.M.S. On receiving reports from Schön and Crowther, the Committee felt that it had a call from God to minister to the tribes of the countries lying around the Niger, and they resolved to go forward when it should please God to open the door. Not only were the great chiefs found ready to listen to the white man's message, *they were equally willing to be taught by black men*, and the Committee recognized that this new factor " strengthened the

obligation to train natives of Africa as religious teachers of their countrymen." There was the further fact that, in Sierra Leone, the Church had ready to hand men and women who were natives of these very Niger countries and were familiar with the languages as being their own mother tongues. In view of this, Sierra Leone was, for the purpose of training, "incomparably beyond any other spot." The Committee therefore placed on record this resolution (February 22, 1842) :—

> That, adverting to the afflictive results of the Niger Expedition . . . the Committee are of opinion that further measures should be adopted, in order to train Natives in Sierra Leone with a view to their being employed as teachers of their countrymen, and in order also to fix the most considerable native dialects and make translations into those dialects for missionary purposes.

A mission to the Niger countries thus became a definite policy for the C.M.S.

IV

THE CALL FROM ABEOKUTA

1838 – 1843

THE hand of God does not always lead in the way men expect. It was so in the founding of the Nigeria Mission.

While the Niger Expedition was being planned and equipped in England, a movement of a very different kind was taking place in Sierra Leone. In Freetown many thousands of freed slaves were slowly settling down to their new life, but their thoughts naturally turned often to the homes and families from which they had been torn so ruthlessly by the slave raiders. Most of them had little or no expectation of again seeing their native land. In their new country they took up various forms of employment in agriculture or industry. But the Negro is a born trader, and not a few engaged in various trading ventures.

In 1838 a half-caste man bought from the Government at a very low price, a captured slave vessel and planned a trading voyage along the coast. He had no difficulty in enlisting willing helpers, and he engaged an Englishman to be captain. The old slaver was re-named the *Wilberforce*, and laden with such goods as were likely to sell, set sail "down coast." Among other places, they reached Lagos and entered the lagoon where, sixteen years

before, Crowther had been rescued from the slave ship.

The name Lagos was new to these Sierra Leonians, but as the *Wilberforce* sailed in, several of them recognized it as the place from which they had been shipped by their captors. "This is Eko," they exclaimed; "this is our country!" On landing they sought information about their own tribes up in the interior, and heard strange stories. They were told that in the great Yoruba Country there had been many wars and much slave raiding. They heard, too, that the Egba tribes, to which they belonged, hearing of a plot to enslave them to the Yoruba chiefs, had fought their way to liberty and had established themselves in a stronghold among rocky hills; there they had built a great city and had fortified it against their foes, calling it Abeokuta. Under a great chief named Shodeke, the Egbas were dwelling in their new home in peace and prosperity, cultivating their lands and selling their produce. Thrilled by this news, the Sierra Leonians made eager inquiries as to the possibilities of visiting Abeokuta, and finding it not impossible, they made the attempt. On reaching the city gates, they were challenged by the guards to whom they gave account of themselves and asked about their relatives. The news of their coming spread rapidly, and strange scenes were witnessed.

The greetings over, their wondrous story told, those traders returned to their ship and to Sierra Leone. There they blazed abroad that they had

found their own kith and kin, and told of Abeokuta, of Shodeke, and of the welcome they had received. Great was the excitement in Freetown, and ere long other vessels set out for Lagos carrying people eager to return to their homeland.

But the inhabitants of Lagos were deeply implicated in the slave trade, brutalized by their hateful business. Finding that the Sierra Leone emigrants brought their possessions with them, the men of Lagos set upon them, robbed them of all they had, and taunted them that they should be thankful that they were allowed to proceed at all. Of nearly 300 emigrants who landed from three ships, not a man or woman escaped with anything but the clothes they wore, and not always with those. They would have been re-enslaved had it not been that they had become British subjects and the slave traders were afraid to touch them. So a new route to Abeokuta had to be found, and from that time the emigrants landed at Badagry, a town on the lagoon some forty miles west of Lagos, and soon a more or less regular stream of Sierra Leonians was passing from Badagry to Abeokuta. Between 1839 and 1842, over 500 ex-slaves returned to their homeland.

The missionaries in Sierra Leone were not a little troubled at the emigration of so many of their flock, and did all they could to advise and caution them of the dangers before them. On the other hand, on reaching Abeokuta, not a few who, in the security of Freetown, had paid but little heed to religious instruction, began to long for it, and joined with

their more zealous fellow-emigrants in sending urgent appeals for teachers to be sent to shepherd them. In Freetown itself there was a growing feeling that a missionary should be sent to look after those who had gone forth into the perils of heathendom, and a petition was presented to the local committee of the C.M.S. As a result, it was resolved to send a young lay missionary, Henry Townsend, to Badagry and Abeokuta to investigate and discover, if possible, the best way of dealing with the situation.[1]

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Embarking, with a couple of African catechists, at Sierra Leone in the ex-slave schooner *Wilberforce*, Townsend sailed slowly along the coast. It took nearly five weeks to reach Badagry, and a most uncomfortable journey it proved to be, for the ship had no accommodation for white passengers. He speaks of his cabin as a mere " dog-house " ; it was just large enough for him to put his mattress on the floor, and so low that he had to crawl in ; when he sat up in bed, his head almost touched the ceiling.

On December 17, 1842, the pioneer landed on the coastal strip opposite Badagry. The town itself does not stand upon the sea shore, but on the farther side of the great lagoon that lies behind the actual coast. This lagoon is part of a series that run for

[1] The Wesleyans, who were very strong in Sierra Leone, were facing the same problem. Many of their adherents were among the emigrants, and these also sent urgent appeals for help. In response, the Wesleyan Missionary Society sent their outstanding man on the coast, Thomas Birch Freeman, to investigate.

more than a hundred miles, more or less parallel with the sea shore, and separated from it by a narrow strip of sandy land usually about a mile or so in width. Badagry was a place of ill repute ; it had long been known as a stronghold of fetishism and human sacrifice, and it was also an important slave market. But hostility to the slavers of Lagos, and a friendship with the rising power of Abeokuta, had somewhat modified the more sinister characteristics of the inhabitants and they were inclined to be friendly to the Sierra Leonian emigrants passing through their town or even settling there, as some of them did for purposes of trade, a fact that caused one section of the place to become known as "Englishtown."

On making inquiries after landing, Townsend learned that the Methodist pioneer, the intrepid Thomas Birch Freeman, had, quite unknowingly, preceded him by nearly three months, and had built a mission house in Badagry ; and at that very moment Freeman was in Abeokuta investigating the possibilities of a Methodist mission there.[1]

On Christmas Eve, Freeman returned to Badagry, and the two pioneers met to discuss their plans for "planting the banner of the Cross" (a familiar phrase of Freeman's) in the very heart of the country long ravaged by the slave raiders. Christmas Day was spent in united worship, the missionaries joined in conducting services for their travelling companions and such Sierra Leonians as were then in

[1] See the present writer's book, *Thomas Birch Freeman*.

Badagry. Thus began that happy fellowship and spirit of co-operation that has always characterized the two Missions in their efforts to evangelize Nigeria.

Townsend was in extremely bad health, and Freeman was not a little anxious as to his strength for the journey to Abeokuta. But Townsend and his African helpers felt that nothing should be allowed to hinder the project, and he resolved to go forward. The more experienced man at once offered all the advice and gave all the help he could. Apparently Townsend had not realized all the difficulties of the journey and was not well-equipped. Freeman therefore gave him supplies of tinned provisions, and other requisites, and offered him the loan of a horse. But Townsend was unaccustomed to riding and decided to be carried in a basket. After a few days together they parted, Freeman to visit the great King of Dahomey[1] and Townsend to proceed on his journey to Abeokuta.

Leaving Badagry on December 29, Townsend was carried forward in what was known as a travelling basket, a most uncomfortable affair, the shape of a coffin, made of basketwork and carried on the heads of two strong men. The traveller lay full length, his head on a pillow, and was carried feet foremost along the narrow bush paths. Townsend found it impossible to look about much, his head being too low, and in the more open country the heat and bright light of the sun upon his face tried him severely.

[1] Freeman left an African worker and wife to take charge of the newly-established mission at Badagry.

The journey took six days, resting all day on Sunday, much to the annoyance of the heathen guide. Through swamp and forest the path led onward. There were streams to be waded and rivers to be crossed in dug-out canoes. The chief peril, however, was that of sudden attack from wandering parties of Lagos people or their allies, who constantly watched the forest paths to kidnap travellers to sell as slaves. To counteract these marauders, Shodeke had established midway a military camp, thus keeping the path open. Shodeke's brother, who was in charge of the camp, received Townsend with kindness though with manifest surprise, for the missionary, unaware of the customs of the country, had not sent in advance a message of his coming. He found that, owing to the stories told them by the returning emigrants, the Egbas had great respect for the English people and were eager to show it in every possible way.

As the little party drew nearer Abeokuta, they met an ever-increasing number of travellers going to or from the city ; one evening, for example, some 200 wayfarers encamped around them. Farms and cultivated land became more frequent.

At last from a hill top Townsend caught a first glimpse of the Egba metropolis, nestling among its rocky hills and huge masses of granite boulders piled one on another as though by giants at play. That evening he and his party encamped by the River Ogun that flows past Abeokuta, and remained there

for the night. A message of welcome had arrived from Shodeke, and a promise to send on the following morning men to escort Townsend into the city.

Early on the morning of January 4, Shodeke's son came with a band of Egba warriors to receive the visitor. A party of Sierra Leonians also came out to join in the welcome and were a little distressed because Townsend was not so well dressed as they thought he should be for such an occasion. Unfortunately he had nothing better to put on, but the emigrants insisted on his using his umbrella as a matter of becoming state. Being the dry season, the river was so low that it was possible to cross its granite bed on foot, and with much noise of drums and shouts of welcome, the crowd of horsemen and others led Townsend over and into the town. It was a truly African procession, without form or order, everybody following his own inclination, some armed with spears or long swords, and others with muskets. "It was a motley group," wrote the missionary in his journal. "Sometimes those armed with muskets would rush forward and discharge them; then the horsemen would have a race, and pull up their horses suddenly when at full gallop." Thus escorted, and sitting in his travelling basket, Townsend entered Abeokuta. After passing through the gate, the crowd increased. Out of every door, and at the corners of the streets, the people gazed at their new visitor. "Long life to you, white man," they cried. "A blessing on you

white man!"[1] Others exclaimed: "It is one of the English who save our people!" For the time, even the markets were suspended, the whole population crowding the streets to unite in the welcome. The efforts of Great Britain to overthrow the slave trade had made a deep impression in Abeokuta. The tremendous welcome, given first to Freeman and then to Townsend, was the popular expression of gratitude.

Before the palace of Shodeke the procession paused. Townsend got out of his basket, and was conducted into the courtyard, where sat the great chief to receive him, clad in scarlet velvet and surrounded by wives and councillors. After a kindly greeting and a few words of introduction, the missionary was led away to a house prepared for his reception, where soon afterwards Shodeke visited him and presented him with a sheep and a bag of cowries, used widely as money in West Africa. Next day Townsend conducted a service at the palace in the presence of Shodeke and a great multitude of people. Very appropriately, he read and expounded the Parable of the Great Feast in St. Luke xiv, being interpreted by Andrew Wilhelm, a catechist who accompanied him.

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During the week Townsend stayed in Abeokuta,

[1] Strictly speaking, Townsend was the first white man to enter Abeokuta. Freeman was the son of a black father and white mother, though the Egbas were not aware of that and regarded him as a white man.

he was greatly impressed with the size and importance of the place. Its population was then estimated to be anything from 45,000 to 80,000[1] though less than twenty years had elapsed since its foundation. Its story is a veritable romance. One of those great piles of rocks and granite boulders, the Olumo, had been the hiding place of bands of robbers who dwelt in its caves, and from this stronghold looked down upon the forest and jungle with which it was then surrounded. In time the robbers vacated the place, and in 1825 the rock became the refuge of a few Egbas who had fled before the merciless raids of slave hunters. Driven by hunger, they began to cultivate plots at the foot of their rocky hiding place.

At that time the whole Yoruba Country was seething with war and turmoil; and by degrees other refugees gathered around the lonely fastness of Olumo. Each of these companies represented a different Egba tribe, and in their new home each founded a separate settlement with its own chieftain and war captain; each retained its own laws, and had its own council house; and each took the name of the town or district from which its people had been driven. Thus, within a few years, there sprang into existence, in the forest around the Olumo rock, a group of villages, each independent, yet united by common peril and the ties of common blood.

About 1827 the great Egba chief Shodeke and his tribe, breaking free from those who sought to enslave them, had made their way to the Olumo

[1] A dozen years later it was estimated to be at least 100,000.

THE FAMOUS OLUMO ROCK AT ABEOKUTA *Photograph by the Author*
Showing the caves in which the early Egba refugees found shelter.

A TYPICAL "HOME" IN THE YORUBA COUNTRY. (See page 249) *Photograph by the Author*
This shows the "compound" or court around which the living rooms are arranged. The verandas, formed by overhanging thatch, are visible to the right.

stronghold and there founded a settlement to which they gave the name of Aké. Shodeke was every inch a leader, and by sheer genius succeeded in welding together those hitherto independent villages until they grew into one great city. To protect themselves from the almost certain onslaught of their enemies, they surrounded the place with a strong rampart of mud, fifteen miles in circumference, and defended on the outer side with a moat. To this new Egba city there was given the name of Abeokuta: "Under the Stone," a reference to its position under and around the great Olumo rock.

The city as Townsend saw it in 1843 was a collection of townships or wards, each representing one of the original tribes of refugees, and each still retaining its own form of self-government. Over each township there was a chief called the *ogboni*, and a war chief called the *balogun*, and each township had its own council of elders. But Shodeke, the wise nation builder, had been elected supreme chief over all, and while each township continued to manage its local affairs, he ruled over the whole with a supreme council of the nation composed of the ogbonis and baloguns of the separate wards. The population steadily increased, the vacant spaces within the walls were either built upon or cultivated, and farms came into existence in the country around. A large and prosperous city had sprung up where a few years before there had been only forest and robber fastnesses. Such prosperity not unnaturally attracted jealous eyes of enemies, and time after

time the Egbas had to defend their liberties. Cruel foes hurled themselves against the walls of Abeokuta, only to be beaten off by the defenders. The Egbas were a people to be reckoned with, and the fame of Shodeke echoed throughout the land.

Such was the man who extended so joyful a welcome to Henry Townsend. A man so enlightened as Shodeke saw instantly the advantages of cultivating the friendship of the English nation. For several years he had been hearing of the British hatred of slavery and kindness to the people of Africa. Now two white men had taken the trouble to visit him and he found them equal to his expectations. He welcomed them with genuine enthusiasm and eagerly responded to their proffered friendship. He had already given Freeman a plot of land for a mission station ; now he was prepared to give one to Townsend also for the C.M.S. He expressed the hope that many white people would come to his city, and he was prepared to welcome them all. No thought of rivalry or " overlapping " occurred to any one.

Great indeed was the opportunity before the two missionary societies. There was ample scope for both in and around the Egba metropolis and the great Yoruba Country beyond. Indeed, the task was greater than either or both of the societies could cope with. One day Townsend climbed the Olumo rock and from that lofty pile gazed down upon the great city that lay at his feet, stretching away among its rocky hills to its great mud rampart. He felt

that at least six missionaries should be stationed there if any real impression was to be made upon its life. Churches and schools should be opened in several different parts of the town so that the gospel message might simultaneously ring forth from them all.

The first visit was not intended for anything more than a reconnaissance, and after a week's stay, our pioneer took leave of Shodeke and his chiefs and returned to Badagry *en route* for Sierra Leone, whence he reported to the Committee in London the results of his investigations.

V

PLANTING THE MISSION IN THE EGBA CAPITAL

1844 – 1846

WHEN Townsend's report reached England, the Committee of the C.M.S. felt that only one course was open to them. The hand of God was beckoning to Abeokuta, and for the moment there was no opportunity of carrying out the earlier project of a mission on the Niger. Every possible circumstance pointed to the Egba capital as the strategic base for the new venture. A number of the teachers and catechists in Freetown, being Egbas, were keen to work among their fellow-countrymen. Crowther himself was an Egba, and, as he had recently been to England for ordination,[1] he was available as the first African clergyman for the proposed mission to his kith and kin. Obviously Townsend was the man to lead the mission, so he too was called to England to be ordained. The Rev. C. A. Gollmer (who had spent a short time in Sierra Leone) was also to be one of the pioneer party.

Naturally the project aroused the deepest interest, not to say excitement, in Freetown. Many Egba and Yoruban ex-slaves volunteered to accompany

[1] In those days, there being no bishop in West Africa, it was necessary to come to England to take Holy Orders. Crowther was the first African in modern times to receive ordination.

the missionaries as carpenters or labourers. The Governor interested himself, and the Commander of the West Coast squadron promised all the help and protection in his power.

On December 18, 1844, after breakfasting with the Governor, the party embarked from Freetown amid scenes of deep emotion and excitement. Crowds gathered at the wharf to see them off. Schön and the other missionaries were there to offer prayer for protection and guidance in the great new enterprise.

The party was a large one, for it was felt that in such a place as Abeokuta a beginning must be made on a scale that would give reasonable hope of success. There were four Europeans : the Rev. and Mrs. C. A. Gollmer, and the Rev. and Mrs. Henry Townsend. The Rev. Samuel Adjai Crowther was accompanied by Mrs. Crowther and their two children. The other African workers were : Mr. Marsh (a catechist) with his wife and two children ; Mr. Phillips (a schoolmaster) ; Mr. Mark Willoughby (the interpreter) with his wife and three children ; four carpenters, three labourers, and two servants. They took with them, in addition to the usual equipment for such a journey, windows and doors and other fittings for the houses they were to build in Abeokuta.

After a month's voyage they landed in surf boats on the sandbank opposite Badagry on January 17, 1845, and on reaching the town were welcomed by the Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Annear of the Wesleyan

Mission, who entertained them at the mission house Freeman had built. A message was sent to Shodeke to tell him of their arrival. Then the first blow fell, the great Egba king was dead ! The fetish priests had taken alarm at his eager welcome of Christian missionaries[1] and in their jealous fear of losing their own power had poisoned him. As the grand old chief lay dying he turned to the priests and sorrowfully rebuked them. " You have succeeded in poisoning me," he said, " but you will never get another Shodeke ! " For long years afterwards old men used to declare that : " On the day Shodeke died the sun forgot to shine and the birds to sing."

Shodeke's death was a serious blow to the C.M.S. pioneers. But they resolved to go forward to the war camp near Ado, and if possible on to Abeokuta. The war chiefs at the camp advised them to remain in Badagry until a successor to Shodeke was appointed, for all was unsettled in the capital. There seemed no alternative ; and as Badagry would have to be the port of entrance for the future, they gave themselves to securing their position there as the Wesleyans had done. A site was secured, and within seven weeks of landing they opened for worship the first C.M.S. church in the new field. On the following morning a day school was

[1] One day while Freeman was in Abeokuta, Shodeke had summoned before him both fetish priests and Moslem moulvis and ordered them to expound their beliefs. Then Freeman proclaimed the Christian message, and the chief was so impressed that he declared : "The white man's religion is true, and both myself and you will have to follow it " (*vide T. B. Freeman*, p. 157).

opened. Then another blow fell ; in April Mrs. Gollmer died, and the new mission field was consecrated by its first Christian grave.

Then came news that the Egba chiefs had elected Sagbua to be their head chief, and the new ruler almost immediately sent down to Badagry a letter of welcome and an invitation for the missionaries to proceed at once to Abeokuta. But a new hindrance arose. The great armies of Dahomey were on the move, and it was believed that they meant to attack the city. The very thought of the terrible Dahomians struck terror everywhere. Their warriors, especially their renowned Amazons, were almost invincible, and the great object of their wars was to capture multitudes of slaves. The chief palace of the King of Dahomey was decorated with the skulls of more than 6000 prisoners taken in a war with Badagry some years before. For some time King Gezo, greatest of all the Dahomian conquerors, had watched with jealous eye the rising power of Abeokuta, and his Amazons were eager to storm its walls. Now, taking advantage of Shodeke's death, they had come, and the land trembled before them.

The Egba war chiefs in the camp near Ado had to face a double peril : the Dahomians were trying to cut them off from Abeokuta, and they feared that their Ado rivals might attack them in the rear. With great courage the Egba commander laid his plans ; part of his force held the camp to keep the Ados at bay, while the larger number went forward to meet the Dahomians and help in the defence of

Abeokuta. The latter force was defeated next day, and wild confusion prevailed ; women and children fled into the bush and tried to escape by unfrequented paths. The danger was a serious one, the very existence of Abeokuta trembled in the balance. Soon the tide of war turned. A force of Amazons was defeated by the Egbas near Ado, and lost its officers (women), and, what was vastly more important, a royal stool and a state umbrella.[1] For the moment the danger had passed; but Gezo swore to be revenged.

Although the Dahomian army had retired, the road to Abeokuta was still blocked, and the missionaries were compelled to remain in Badagry, and they were not safe even there. For the Ados and Popos, egged on by the slavers of Lagos, had joined in the war with Abeokuta and threatened to attack Badagry, but they were eventually beaten off. Thus for eighteen months the pioneers were disappointed again and again. But the time of waiting was not altogether lost. Though the Badagry people were unresponsive and even expected to be paid for sending their children to school or for attending church, the enforced delay gave time for working at the Yoruba language, and Crowther translated portions of the Bible in readiness for the advance. Occasional messengers passed between them and Abeokuta, and it was clear that they would be warmly welcomed when the path could be opened.

It opened in a most unexpected way. Domingo

[1] The equivalent of a standard.

José Martino, a great Portuguese slave dealer of Porto Novo, found that the continual state of war was interfering with his business by making difficult the conveyance of slaves to the coast. He therefore used his "friendly offices" to bring about peace. In this he succeeded, but fearing that missionary work in Abeokuta might bring still further disaster to his trade, he persuaded his Badagry allies to do all in their power to prejudice the Egbas against the missionaries. The scheme failed, for the Abeokuta chiefs sternly answered: "We can ourselves tell who are our best friends, those who rescue our children from captivity and send them freely to us again, or those who purchase them for perpetual slavery and misery. The English are our friends; and you, people of Badagry, take care; for if any wrong is done to them in your town, you shall answer to us for it." They then summoned to their presence the missionaries' messenger, told him what had passed, and sent him with a cordial invitation to the missionaries to come at once to Abeokuta.

It was the middle of the rainy reason. But rather than lose the opportunity, the missionaries resolved to face the risks involved, and towards the end of July they set out, Gollmer, however, remaining in charge at Badagry.

The weather was as bad as could be for travelling and the narrow bush paths were flooded. The Townsends and Mr. Crowther rode on ponies, but Mrs. Crowther preferred a hammock, while the children were carried, African fashion, tied to the

backs of carriers. Often the horses floundered up to their knees in water or sank deep in a swamp ; at best the ground was so slippery that they could hardly keep their footing. In other places the path, long neglected through the months of war, was so overgrown as to be almost impassable and the horses' feet got entangled in briars, while overhanging branches or creepers caught the heads of the riders. Drenched with frequent showers and with torn clothes and bruised limbs, they plodded on. Mrs. Townsend had difficulty in keeping her seat, and Mrs. Crowther's carriers slipped and fell so often that she was obliged to walk most of the way. The path itself twisted and turned so tortuously between the trunks of trees that frequently there was not room to turn the hammock pole. At night, the only shelter was a tent pitched on the wet ground, with a fire to dry their clothes. Two nights their rest was still further disturbed by invasions of columns of the terrible driver ants. The missionaries had provided for crossing one river that they knew would be swollen to a considerable width, by taking with them a large barrel to use as a boat, and it served the purpose splendidly, the carriers piloting it backwards and forwards till all were across.

Abeokuta was reached at last (August 3, 1846). The Ogun was swollen to a broad, deep river, and it was raining in tropical style as the party entered the city. But a great reception awaited them. The public crier had been sent round to make proclamation as to their arrival, and wet as they were they

were paraded round the town in triumphant welcome before being conducted to Sagbua. Mrs. Townsend, with her side-saddle, attracted general attention, she being the first white woman most of the people had seen. Moreover, the Egbas were intensely proud that Abeokuta had been chosen as the first town for the great English people to reside in, and it was on every tongue that the news of their arrival " would fly from Lagos to Ilorin, and excite the envy of all the chiefs." There had been eager discussion as to which chief and township should have the honour of entertaining the visitors ; but eventually it was settled that it should go to Sagbua as premier chief. In the public council house of the Council of the Nation, and surrounded by the chiefs, he accorded to them a splendid welcome, and at the very first interview showed his sagacity in a remarkable way. The pioneers presented to him, as a gift from the C.M.S., a large mirror brought from England for the purpose. Lest so rare a present should stir up jealousy among his brother chiefs he caused it to be hung, not in his own palace, but in the council house, that it might be public property.

With as little delay as possible, a public council was summoned, under the presidency of Sagbua, at which Crowther, in his Yoruba mother-tongue, explained fully the object of their coming and their intentions as to future labours. Chiefs and people listened eagerly, promised to send their children to learn the white man's letters and to help in the building of houses and churches, and then and there

contributed to the work, each one promising to give at least a thousand cowries (equal to about half-a-crown), while Sagbua himself contributed 20,000 cowries and a sheep. Crowther, commenting on this generous offering, said : " No wonder : some of the chiefs had liberated relations of their own sitting by them at the very time."

Probably no pioneer missionaries ever received such a spontaneous and joyous welcome to a new field.

VI

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED IN ABEOKUTA

1846 – 1851

REMEMBERING that Abeokuta was a collection of townships, each with its own *ogboni* and self-governing, the first few days were wisely spent in visiting each chief in turn. In every case the missionaries were received by the local ogboni with his balogun and full council of local elders, and in every case Crowther, as an Egba, was the spokesman, explaining so that all might hear in their own tongue the object of their coming. Thus the national and municipal organizations of the city were utilized for giving publicity to the mission and making clear to all the motives that had brought them.

The next thing was to acquire a site on which to build a mission house, a church, and a school. A piece of land three acres in extent was at once given to the missionaries by the chiefs, and as Akè was the "royal township," in which the great Shodeke had lived, and where the council always met, it was decided that the mission centre should be there also. The house was to be built of mud, like all the houses in Abeokuta. The offer of threepence a day drew so many helpers that the pay was reduced to twopence. But still the number

increased, and nearly 400 offered their services. For the third day the wage offered was one penny, but 670 persons came forward eager to be taken on. The chiefs watched the work proceeding under the guidance of the missionaries and Sierra Leone craftsmen, and from time to time, as they saw new methods employed, they exclaimed: "God is great! White men have sense!"

Townsend and Crowther did not wait for the completion of the buildings before entering upon their true mission. Regular services were held from the very first, even though there was no place to hold them save the veranda formed by the overhanging thatch in one of the compounds, with part of the congregation under cover and the rest sitting or standing in the open. The people listened attentively to the Christian message, especially when Crowther spoke to them. Each Sunday the congregations increased; and week-day preaching services were held in the markets and in the compounds of the chiefs' houses. Sometimes as many as 500 people were present and great interest was aroused throughout the town.

Amid these busy labours a great joy came to Samuel Crowther. Within three weeks of reaching Abeokuta he found the beloved mother and the sisters from whom he had been torn twenty-five years before and of whom he had heard nothing in the meanwhile. Hearing of her son's arrival, the aged mother set out at once for Abeokuta – she was living in a village not far away – and soon

heathen mother and Christian son stood face to face. Crowther himself has described for us the thrill of that meeting. He wrote :—

> When she saw me she trembled. She could not believe her own eyes. We grasped one another, looking at each other in silence and great astonishment, while big tears rolled down her emaciated cheeks. She trembled as she held me by the hand, and called me by the familiar names. . . . We could not say much, but sat still, casting many an affectionate look towards each other. . . . I cannot describe my feelings ; I have given up all hope, and now after a separation of twenty-five years we are brought together again !

In her joy, the old woman, whose name was Afala, wanted to offer sacrifice to her heathen gods ! What tales they had to tell when the first flush of overwhelming joy was over ! After years of slavery she had been redeemed by her two daughters, they themselves having been set free by their husbands.[1] Soon the whole family met the long-lost brother, and the mother came to live with him at the mission house. She received Christian instruction with gladness, for she recognized that it was the Christian God Who had wrought such wonders for her son, and when, on February 5, 1848, the first group of converts received holy baptism, she was one of them. Thus Samuel Crowther, the ex-slave, had the joy of baptizing his own mother into the Church of Christ. He had translated the baptismal service into Yoruba for the occasion. Another of that first company of converts was a priestess of Ifa, and four of Crowther's own nieces were baptized at the same time.

[1] Mr. Marsh, the catechist, likewise found his mother in Abeokuta

The first church had already been opened (March 21, 1847), a simple mud structure with a thatch roof, capable of seating a couple of hundred people. It was in Akè, the royal township. Other chiefs gave permission for the building of simple little places for worship in their townships, and by the close of that year no less than four were in use. They were so primitive that they were described as "sheds," and were situated in the districts of Igbein, Owu, Itoku, and Ikaja. The chief of the last-mentioned township was particularly friendly, choosing for the church a site opposite his own dwelling and superintending the measuring of the ground; when the church was opened, he was the first to enter.

But amid many encouragements, the missionaries had not far to look for customs and practices that caused them deep pain, and sometimes made their blood boil. Though the people vaguely recognized a supreme God, whom they called Olorun, and to whom the enlightened Shodeke had built a small temple, the worship of the city centred round such deities as Ifa (the god of secrets), Ogun (the god of iron and war), Shango (the god of thunder), and perhaps most of all a powerful spirit believed to dwell in the Olumo rock and worshipped in the largest of its caves. Sacrifices were constantly offered, and the people held the gods in awe; but the fetish cults, then, as to-day, had no spiritual and very little moral value. Though loving freedom for themselves, the Egbas had no thought for other

people. They did not scruple to hold slaves or to trade in them, and on occasion to engage in a war upon some neighbouring town or village, a war that was in reality a slave raid. Very soon after Crowther found his long-lost relatives, he was thrown into great anxiety, for a strong force of Egbas laid siege to Abaka, the town where his two sisters were living. After a four months' siege the Abaka people were compelled to surrender and were brought to Abeokuta as slaves. "Another town swept off the face of the earth," wrote Townsend ; "it was full of life and activity ; now all is silent and desolate." As the captives from Abaka were led into the Egba capital, Crowther, in his anxiety, kept watch for his dear ones and found his brother, two sisters, and their children among the number, all of whom he was able to ransom for 150 dollars.

A month after the baptism of Crowther's mother, a new missionary reached Abeokuta, the Rev. J. C. Müller. He had landed at Badagry earlier in the year, and within a month had laid his wife in the grave beside Mrs. Gollmer. Almost heart-broken, Müller passed on up-country to face the work before him, and he at once relieved Mr. and Mrs. Townsend who greatly needed a short furlough.

One of the results of the mission had been the creation of a desire on the part of the Egba chiefs for trade with England. But the great obstacle to this was the fact that the shortest and most convenient way from Abeokuta to the sea, that

through Lagos, the natural port of the whole Yoruba Country, had been long closed to them by the slave-raiding fraternity. The Egbas were also anxious to strengthen their friendship with the British. When, therefore, the chiefs learned that Henry Townsend was about to visit his native land they desired him to carry for them a message to Queen Victoria. Sagbua himself dictated it in full council. It is of such interest that we give it in full :—

The words which Sagbua, and other chiefs of Abeokuta, send to the Queen of England. May God preserve the Queen in life for ever ; Shodeke, who communicated with the Queen before, is no more.

We have seen your servants the missionaries, whom you have sent to us in this country. What they have done is agreeable to us. They have built a house of God. They have taught the people the Word of God, and our children beside. We begin to understand them.

There is a matter of great importance that troubles us : what must we do that it must be removed away ? We do not understand the doings of the people of Lagos, and other people on the coast. They are not pleased that you should deliver our country people from slavery. They wish that the road may be closed, that we may never have any intercourse with you. What shall we do that the road may be opened, that we may navigate the River Ossa to the River Ogun ? The laws that you have in your country we wish to follow in the track of the same – the slave trade, that it may be abolished. We wish it to be so. The Lagos people will not permit ; they are supporting the slave traders. We wish for lawful traders to trade with us. We want, also, those who will teach our children mechanical arts, agriculture, and how things are prepared, as tobacco, rum, and sugar. If such a teacher should come to us, do not permit it to be known, because the Lagos people, and other people on the coast, are not pleased at the friendship you are showing to us.

We thank the Queen of England for the good she had done in

delivering our people from slavery. Respecting the road, that it should not be closed, there remains much to speak with each other.

In due time this letter was presented to Her Majesty, and she commanded the Earl of Chichester to send a reply on her behalf. Sagbua and his chiefs had, with their letter, sent the Queen a present of cloth finely woven on the looms of Abeokuta, and in return she sent to Sagbua a handsomely bound Bible, indeed *two* Bibles, one in English and the other in Arabic, there being no Yoruba version at that time. The Prince Consort added a gift of a steel corn mill.

Great was the interest when the Queen's message and the royal "dashes" arrived in the Egba capital, and a special assembly of the chiefs and people was summoned to hear the message from far distant England. Crowther had the honour of reading the letter and translating it. Here it is :—

I have had the honour of presenting to the Queen the letter of Sagbua and other chiefs of Abeokuta, and also their present of a piece of cloth.

The Queen has commanded me to convey her thanks to Sagbua and the chiefs, and her best wishes for their true and lasting happiness, and for the peace and prosperity of the Yoruba nation.

The Queen hopes that arrangements may be made for affording to the Yoruba natives the free use of the River Ossa, so as to give them opportunities for commerce with this and other countries.

This commerce between nations in exchanging the fruits of the earth, and of each other's industry, is blessed by God. Not so the commerce in slaves, which makes poor and miserable the nation that sells them, and brings neither wealth nor the blessings of God to the nation that buys them, but the contrary.

The Queen and people of England are very glad to know that Sagbua and the chiefs think as they do upon this subject of commerce. But commerce alone will not make a nation great and happy

like England. England has become great and happy by the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ.

The Queen is therefore very glad that Sagbua and the chiefs have so kindly received the missionaries, who carry with them the Word of God, and that so many of the people are willing to hear it.

In order to show how much the Queen values God's Word, she sends with this, as a present to Sagbua, a copy of this Word in two languages, one the Arabic, the other the English.

The Church Missionary Society wish all happiness and blessings of eternal life to Sagbua and all the people of Abeokuta. They are very thankful to the chiefs for the kindness and protection afforded to their missionaries, and they will not cease to pray for the spread of God's Truth, and of all other blessings, in Abeokuta and throughout Africa, in the name and for the sake of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(Signed) CHICHESTER.

Having read the Queen's message, Crowther held up the Bibles so that all could see them, and spoke to them of God's Word through it to mankind.[1] Then the corn mill was exhibited ; a quantity of corn was put into it and loud were the exclamations of surprise and acclamation when, by turning the handle, fine white flour was produced.

. . . . . .

Fourteen months elapsed between the sending off of Sagbua's letter and the receipt of the reply from Queen Victoria. During that period things moved rapidly in Abeokuta. There were, on the one hand, great encouragements, and on the other, very serious opposition.

Young Müller proved himself a born evangelist.

[1] These Bibles were destroyed some years later in a palace fire. When King Edward VII heard of this, he sent another Bible (with a suitable inscription on the cover) to the reigning Alaké to replace those destroyed.

He conceived it to be his duty, anywhere and everywhere, to preach the Gospel of Christ to the heathen, and almost from his first day in Abeokuta he devoted himself unsparingly to his task. Taking one of the catechists with him, day by day he visited one township after another. Sarah B. Tucker has given us a fine picture of his apostolic zeal. She wrote :—

> His zeal and holy boldness were quickened by the sights and sounds that continually met him. Now a long procession, the people were carrying idols on their heads, and shouting in honour of the deities ; at another time a company of women were drumming, dancing . . . and if he entered the house of a chief, the figures of Orisha and of Obbafulo showed that earthly riches and success in war were the objects of supreme desire.
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> He followed the example of his Lord in his mode of teaching, and in taking the subjects of his addresses from the spot on which he stood, or the objects with which he was surrounded. A projecting rock at Ijemmo served him as a pulpit, as he unfolded the infinite value of the true "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Crossing a stream, he stopped and drew attention to the cleansing power of its waters, and led his hearers to the blood of Jesus that cleanseth from sin. At another time he met a hundred people coming up from the river with calabashes of water, and arrested their steps and fixed their attention by crying out in the words of the prophet : " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water ! " The markets afforded him abundant opportunities, sometimes thousands were to be found congregated together ; and no sooner did he stand still among them than a group would gather round while the corn, the salt, the dry wood, exposed for sale supplied him with topics for instruction. People often literally thronged him and some would follow him from place to place that they might hear more.

Such preaching naturally aroused curiosity, awakened conviction, or produced hostility. Many questions, intelligent and otherwise, were put to him, and men argued with one another concerning

the message he proclaimed. One old chief greatly encouraged Müller by saying : " We old men are sure that good will come from preaching God's Word here. Preach, preach ; do not mind what some say, but persevere." For eighteen months Müller continued his work. Then his health began to fail and a little later he died.

Meanwhile, Crowther was steadily building up the work in his section of the town. He had built for his growing flock a mud and thatch church similar to the one in Akè, his old friends in Sierra Leone providing the money for it and Egba Christians doing most of the work. He was busy, too, with the all-important work of translation and sent home for press St. Luke's Gospel, Acts, Romans, and a catechism. Great was the joy among his scholars when a supply of Yoruba primers arrived. Crowther himself established a school for boys, and Mrs. Crowther, who had been a teacher in Freetown, took charge of one for girls.

All missionary experience has shown that such work never goes on long without exciting opposition. In the very nature of things, the old priests see danger ahead and do all in their power to frustrate the progress of Christianity. It was so in Abeokuta. The churches at Akè and Igbein were filled to overflowing, the smaller churches were attended by hundreds, and the number of candidates for baptism was steadily increasing.

The inevitable trouble began over difficulties created in family affairs by the conversion of some

young men who were shortly to be married. Urged on by jealous priests, the fathers of the betrothed girls refused to give them to their prospective husbands, on the grounds that, having become Christians, the men would not worship the household gods. The young men stood firm, and banded themselves not to marry any girl who would not join them in reading God's Book. Attempts were made to poison some of these resolute youths, and Christian girls also were threatened with the mysterious terrors of the Oro that for ages had filled with fear the heart of every Yoruba woman. Things grew more serious. Christian men and women were seized and thrown into prison, and some were put into stocks. One man was in the stocks for five days till his legs and feet were swollen with pain.

The first case of the death of an Egba convert roused new opposition over the matter of Christian burial ; half a dozen men and women were made prisoners, kept for five days, and then severely scourged before being released, and strictly forbidden to receive further Christian instruction. In Igbore the storm broke out with redoubled fury. Everything was done to make the situation terrifying to the converts. The dreaded Oro was called out, and with a furious beating of drums, an excited crowd, armed with whips, clubs, and cutlasses, chased the Christians through the streets, and, when caught, dragged them to the council house of that township. There both men and women were mercilessly scourged, and the feet of the men were

pushed through holes in the wall and made fast on the outside. Some of these holes were two feet above the ground on which the sufferers were forced to lie.

For five days and nights those people lay there, exposed alternately to the scorching tropical sun and tropical rain. Even food was denied them, and all the time they were pestered to forsake their new faith. Some must surely have died had it not been that on the council there were men who opposed the action of their colleagues and secretly fed and comforted the poor victims. Meanwhile, the dwellings of the prisoners were attacked and plundered of everything worth carrying away; even the doors were taken off their hinges and stolen. As so often happens, the persecutors overshot their mark, and the constancy of the Christians made a deep impression. There grew a general feeling of sympathy with the people who could suffer so bravely for their faith. Even the persecutors were puzzled, and asked: "What is it that the white man gives you to eat that makes your hearts so strong?"

In the Igbein, Itori, and Imo quarters of the town similar persecutions broke out. But in the other townships the chiefs, notably Sagbua, refused to permit it, stood by the Christians, protected them to the limit of their power, and in the end secured the liberation of the prisoners in those places where the councils had persecuted them. A visit from the British consul in the following year, the

first " official " visit ever paid, had a marked effect on the persecutors. The afflictions neither daunted the courage of the Christians nor hindered the spread of the Gospel. Indeed, the time had come for expansion. The Townsends returned from furlough and several new missionaries arrived and this made it possible to extend the work beyond the town.[1] One of the new arrivals, the Rev. David Hinderer, was set free for pioneering expeditions in the surrounding country. Sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, and sometimes by canoe, he visited the villages and small towns, making friends with chiefs and people, and usually found ready listeners to the message he brought. Often, while preaching in some village market, the chiefs asked him to " sit down " in their midst (*i.e.*, to come and live among them) ; and as this was in line with the policy of expansion now in the mind of the missionaries and the C.M.S. Committee, Hinderer looked out for a suitable village for the attempt. Opportunities presented themselves at several places, and at last Osielle, a small town some eight miles from Abeokuta, was chosen, and it became the first out-station of the mission. Hinderer settled there in the autumn of 1850, and at first lived in two small rooms in the chief's compound. In one of these rooms the chief kept his idols and worshipped them daily, but he removed them to make room for the welcome guests.

[1] About this time, also, the first American Baptist missionary arrived in Abeokuta, and European traders were beginning to come.

On visiting the villages round his new station, Hinderer was ever conscious of the fear in which the people lived. They were in daily dread of the slave raiders, for every one knew that at any moment their foes might swoop down upon their village and carry them off into bondage. As he came upon men hiding in quiet places to do their work, he was constantly reminded of Gideon threshing corn in the wine press for fear of the Midianites. It was evident that outside the walls of Abeokuta there was no security. Within six months Abeokuta itself was threatened with destruction.

A hundred miles to the west, the great Dahomian king, Gezo, was planning to hurl his full strength against the Egba capital. In his skull-decorated palace at Abomey, a strange scene had taken place.[1] It was the season of the annual festival with all its horrors of human sacrifice and ferocity. In one of the vast courtyards of his palace, the troops had paraded before their monarch. Regiment after regiment filed past, 7000 trained warriors, and took their oath of fidelity. The men paraded first ; then came the most dreaded part of the army, the terrible Amazons. Under their female officers those fearless, ferocious women advanced to the throne, 2400 strong, singing lustily :—

> The Amazons are ready to die in war ;
> Now is the time to send them forth.

Standing before Gezo, one Amazon chief cried

[1] It was witnessed and fully recorded by Commander Forbes, R.N., who was then visiting the king.

on behalf of that terrible sisterhood : " As the blacksmith takes an iron bar and by fire changes its fashion, so we have changed our nature. We are no longer women, we are men ! " They began literally to clamour to be sent forth on an errand of conquest, and one word was upon their lips. Louder and louder that cry arose as one division after another pressed to the throne, a fierce, vengeful cry, one word, and that word was " *Abeokuta !* "

With countenaces becoming more and more hard and cruel every moment, the Amazons waved their weapons and bowed before their king. " We have conquered the people of Mahi," they cried. " Now give us Abeokuta ! . . . Have we not destroyed Attahpahm ? Let us go to Abeokuta ! We will conquer or die ! . . . If we do not conquer, our heads are at your disposal."

" As sure as Abeokuta now stands, we will destroy it ! " cried another Amazon officer as she knelt before the royal stool. " Give us Abeokuta ! " yelled her division in chorus. And as the standard bearers came forward with their skull-decorated ensigns, yet another regiment saluted and there came an even more sinister note ; one officer reminded the king that, two years before, the Abeokutans had defeated an Amazon regiment ; and at that reference, a loud cry for vengeance rent the air. And again there was the cry : " Give us Abeokuta ! "

It must not be supposed that this desire to conquer Abeokuta was nothing beyond Dahomian lust for

blood. For some time the Egbas, conscious of their growing power, had irritated their terrible neighbours by making raids upon their frontiers and destroying more than twenty-five of their villages and small towns, thus provoking the Dahomians beyond endurance.

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Fortunately the news of the coming attack reached the Egbas in good time. As early as January, 1851, Beecroft, the British consul, warned them of Gezo's intentions.[1] Sagbua and some of the more energetic chiefs at once began to make preparations ; some miles of the city wall were repaired, and all possible was done to repel the enemy. On Saturday, March 1, came news that the Dahomian army was approaching, 16,000 strong, 10,000 men and 6000 Amazons. The excitement in Abeokuta was intense. Against this well-trained and disciplined army, the Egbas had only 8000 fighting men. Yet every one knew that it would be a life and death struggle, and they managed to muster 15,000 men for the defence.

That Sunday was a day of suspense. The Christians gathered in their churches and cried to God for deliverance from their cruel foe. Very real and full of present meaning were the familiar words : " Give peace in our time, O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God." Townsend at Aké, Crowther at

[1] Beecroft had been with Forbes in Abomey and had witnessed the scenes just described.

Igbein, and Smith at Ikija, sought to strengthen and advise their people. All day long scouts brought in reports of the enemy's approach, and early on Monday morning, the Dahomians crossed the Ogun and stood before the walls. Fortunately they had been misled by the people of Issagga (who were secretly aiding the Egbas) and delivered their attack on the south side, where the defences were strongest. Had they carried out their original intention of approaching from the north (where the walls were in ruins) nothing, humanly speaking, could have saved the town. As it was, the conflict was a fierce one. The Dahomians flung themselves against the defences with ferocious recklessness ; and the Egbas resisted each attack with desperate courage. The din was terrible ; the shouts of the enemy as they came on time after time in well-ordered ranks, were answered by the heavy fire of musketry from the walls. The Egba women, and even the children, showed remarkable courage and stood behind their menfolk to reload the guns and carry water to quench their thirst, for all knew they were fighting for life and liberty.

Then the Dahomians extended their lines; but the Egbas saw the manœuvre and met it by lengthening their own line of defence. Over a battle front of a mile the conflict raged. There were moments when the issue trembled in the balance. At one point, after almost superhuman efforts, the enemy succeeded in making a breach in the wall and pressed through in triumph. For a moment the Egbas

wavered. Had they given way the day would have been lost and thousands of their heads would have been carried to Abomey. But at that moment, when the issue hung by a thread, some one gave a cry of surprise, the Dahomians who had breached the wall were not men *but women* ! Instantly the wavering Egbas rallied. They were not going to be beaten by women, and with a tremendous effort they stemmed the tide.

The fight had now raged for six hours without a pause. From the top of a high rock, behind the Akè mission house, the missionaries, with intense anxiety, watched the struggle, praying all the time that God would deliver the city they loved so well. Then as the sun was sinking towards the west, they detected a new development : the Egbas were outflanking their foes. The Dahomians wavered, and the defenders poured out from the gates to press their advantage. To baffle their enemies, they set fire to the dry grass that stood ten and twelve feet high, and swiftly the flames and smoke added confusion to the scene. Before those fierce onslaughts the Dahomians fell back, leaving hundreds of their dead upon the field. But their discipline and valour prevented the defeat from becoming a rout, and all through the night they fought rearguard actions.

At dawn, the Egbas pressed forward in force to drive their beaten foe from the country. At Issagga, another decisive battle was fought, if anything more deadly than that before the walls of Abeokuta, and again the Egbas were victorious. The proud

Dahomians' armies were now in full retreat, and their losses were estimated at more than 3000 slain and 1000 taken prisoners.

Great was the rejoicing in the town, and not a few of the chiefs and people openly acknowledged that they owed their deliverance to the God of the Christians. They realized, too, that had not the white men warned them of their peril, the Dahomians would have caught them unprepared and their fate would have been sealed. On the Sunday that followed that eventful week the services were crowded, and with grateful hearts the Christians sang : " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." But sorrow was mixed with joy, for some Christians had fallen in the battle and some were missing, were in fact carried off by the enemy to an unknown fate.

The missionaries were not a little anxious lest the triumph should be marred by cruelty to the prisoners who had fallen into the hands of the conquerors. With people still heathen, revenge would have been natural ; and the possibility of it was increased by the violent behaviour of some of the captives. Two captured Amazons, for instance, killed the people who took them food. Yet Townsend was able to write : " I am not aware that the Egbas have acted cruelly towards their prisoners."

VII

A DECADE OF EXPANSION AND PROGRESS

1851 – 1860

THE year 1851 was one of continual warfare throughout the area of the infant mission. In March there was the Dahomian attack on Abeokuta recorded in our last chapter. Though beaten off, there was only too good ground to fear that Gezo might do what Dahomian kings had so often done, wash the graves of his ancestors in the blood of human sacrifices and then return with increased strength to blot out the town that had dared to resist him. Commander Forbes therefore visited Abeokuta to advise the Egba chiefs as to the defence of their city, a visit that helped greatly to strengthen the feelings of friendship towards England.

On the coast, matters were rapidly approaching a crisis in which Lagos, Badagry, Porto Novo, Dahomey, and Abeokuta were all more or less involved. For several years there had been a marked increase in the slave traffic. The new Free Trade policy of Great Britain had led to a great increase of sugar planting in Brazil and Cuba, and that increased the demand for slaves for the plantations ; consequently slave running revived. "Sugar became cheaper in England and the cost fell upon Africa." Synchronizing with this, there was in

AN INTERESTING MISSIONARY GROUP AT THE WILBERFORCE OAK IN HOLWOOD PARK, KESTON, KENT

The tree and stone seat just visible behind it mark the place where Wilberforce resolved to introduce into Parliament his Bill for abolishing the slave trade. *From the left :* Mr. E. Hutchinson (Lay Secretary, C.M.S.), the Rev. D. Hinderer, Archdeacon H. Johnson, Bishop Crowther, Mr. King, the Rev. (afterwards Bishop) James Johnson, the Rev. H. Townsend.

England a strong movement for the withdrawal of the patrol fleet from the coast, partly on the grounds of expense and partly on the pretext of its ineffectiveness. The C.M.S. Committee and all other friends of Africa knew that with the withdrawal of the cruisers the slave traffic would grow by leaps and bounds, and the work of forty years would be undone. A stiff battle had to be fought in England, and missionary and church leaders threw themselves into the conflict. We find the secretaries and members of the Committee, and such missionaries as were on furlough, going constantly to the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and to the official and private residences of Her Majesty's Ministers to urge their case.

Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell took up the matter most earnestly, and when the resolution to withdraw the squadron came before the House of Commons it was defeated. The Government adopted a policy of increasing, instead of diminishing, their efforts to crush the slave traffic.

But those interested in the slave trade stirred themselves to defend it and if possible to sweep the English from the Slave Coast.[1] To this end Kosoko, the usurper chief of Lagos, and the chiefs of Porto Novo combined with the Popo chiefs in Badagry.

Three months after the attack on Abeokuta, the Popo slavery party in Badagry, instigated by

[1] The name then given to the coast of Africa from the Volta to the Niger, because it was the chief sphere of export of slaves.

Kosoko, rose against those who were favourable to the Egbas and the British (June 12, 1851). In the fierce conflict that ensued, the town was set on fire and totally destroyed, except the quarter where the C.M.S. and Wesleyan missions and the trading concerns were situated. But the attack was repulsed with great slaughter. Kosoko was furious at the failure of his plans. Badagry had become the Egba point of contact with the sea ; it was there that the Egbas and the white men " shook hands " ; Sierra Leonian traders landed or embarked there as they journeyed to and fro between Freetown and Abeokuta. In his blind rage Kosoko resolved upon another effort to capture Badagry, believing it to be the key to the situation. Rallying his allies, a few weeks after the first failure, he made a new attack on the town (July 22, 1851). Soon after dawn a fleet of 150 large canoes, each with twenty-five to thirty men, and several mounted with swivel guns, approached along the lagoon and began the grand attack, and were later reinforced by their allies from Porto Novo. But the timely arrival of a force of Egbas turned the scale and after a six hours' struggle the enemy drew off, beaten. All through the trying experiences, Gollmer, though too ill to stand up, stuck to his post. He wrote : " I felt that I was at the post where God had placed me and I must not desert it."

Still undaunted, Kosoko began to prepare for a still greater effort to capture Badagry in which all his allies were to co-operate. But the wily chief

had not counted the cost. Britain had decreed that the slave traffic must cease, and she could not be defied by the chief of a little island in a lagoon. Moreover, the 3000 Sierra Leonians in Abeokuta, and several hundreds more in Badagry, were British subjects and had to be protected in their lawful trade, and it was obvious that there would be trouble so long as Kosoko had any power. So it was resolved to strike a decisive blow at Lagos. On December 26, 1851, a British squadron sailed up the lagoon, landed a force of marines, and after severe fighting, Lagos was taken, Kosoko the usurper deposed, and the slave market closed. Akitoye, the rightful chief, was reinstated, and he at once entered into a treaty to suppress slavery and open the port to lawful trade. This was the fatal blow to the overseas slave traffic ; with Lagos in British hands, its final suppression was only a question of time. Thus closed that eventful year 1851.

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For the mission, the whole outlook was changed by these events. The natural road to Abeokuta (from Lagos by the River Ogun) was now open. Indeed, by virtue of its geographic position, the island-town was the gateway to the whole of the Egba, Ijebu, Yoruba, and Ijesha Countries. With the opening of Lagos, the fate of Badagry, always inconvenient of approach, was sealed, and from that time it steadily declined. As a missionary, as well as a trade centre, Lagos was better in every way.

The work in Badagry, in spite of the devoted labours of Gollmer and his colleagues, had not been very successful, for the Popos were not attracted by the message of Christ. So the new opportunity in Lagos was eagerly seized upon ; a catechist was sent immediately, and on January 10, 1852, in the presence of the restored chief Akitoye, he preached the first Christian sermon in the town that was destined to become the greatest port in West Africa. Soon Gollmer followed, for as Badagry lay in ruins there was little purpose in remaining there. An important new mission station was thus opened in a key position.[1]

Up-country, Abeokuta (with its one out-station at Osielle) was still the only centre of Christian light and English influence, a beacon in the midst of the surrounding heathenism. The Christian position there had been consolidated, and the time for an advance had now come.

Several days' journey to the north lay the great town of Ibadan. At that period it was smaller and of less importance than Abeokuta, its walls being only ten miles in circumference, and its population less than that of the Egba city.[2] But it lay in the very heart of the Yoruba Country, a very important centre for evangelistic purposes. Soon after the deliverance of Abeokuta from the Dahomians, and while the troubles with Badagry and Lagos were

[1] The Wesleyans also quickly occupied the new port.

[2] To-day it is the largest pagan city in Africa with a population of 240,000.

still in progress, David Hinderer turned his mind to Ibadan, and sought from Sagbua and his war captain permission to visit it. This was far from easy to obtain, for a good deal of jealousy existed between the Egbas and the men of Ibadan, the former being excessively proud of their friendship with the English and not wanting to share with other towns the honour of having white men living among them. Sagbua and his chiefs were eager to keep the missionaries in Egba territory, and urged every conceivable difficulty.

But Hinderer was not to be put off, and in the end secured permission on condition that the Ibadan people were willing to receive him. A messenger was sent to Ibadan, and contrary to Sagbua's expectation he returned with a hearty invitation. The journey through the forests and mountains was not a little dangerous, for the people of the Ijebu Country to the east were prone to attack small parties of travellers. Hinderer therefore joined a caravan of some 4000 people, chiefly African merchants with an escort of warriors. But with so large a company delays were numerous; the soldiers were inclined to linger, drinking and quarrelling and even trying to extort money from the people they were supposed to protect. Such company was distasteful, and Hinderer and a few others resolved to risk the perils and push on alone. "I must confess," he wrote, "that I sometimes felt uneasy, ahead of all the caravan, in the midst of the dark lurking-places of our sworn enemies the

Ijebus ; but my trust was in the Lord on Whose errand I was thus exposed."

The forest was so dense and the path so narrow and overgrown that often he had difficulty in forcing his horse through the entangled creepers and overhanging branches. All his party suffered, too, from thirst until they found some rainwater in a hollow of rock in an otherwise dried-up river. At night Hinderer and his companions had to lie down on the ground and sleep in the forest, and they had no means of lighting a fire. He lay awake listening to the night noises of the forest and feeling "an awful loneliness." After five days' travelling, he reached Ibadan. He was the first white man to visit the town, and his arrival caused great excitement ; he was greeted with cheers as he proceeded through the streets to the dwelling of Abere, the head chief.

Though, like the Egbas, the people of Ibadan belonged to the great Yoruba race, they were of a different branch and unlike them in many ways. They were more warlike, less inclined to agriculture and commerce ; all the important chiefs were war chiefs, and both they and their people delighted in fighting; cruelty and human sacrifice were such common features that the surrounding peoples were apt to call them "the mad dogs of Ibadan." Only two years before Hinderer arrived, a notable chief had passed away, and seventy human beings were sacrificed over his grave. Abere appeared to be less cruel than his predecessor, but

Hinderer found him and all the other leading men of the town terribly demoralized ; often when he went to the council house for a palaver he found them too drunk to conduct business. Moslems were numerous in Ibadan ; many of them were engaged in the slave traffic, but they were in high favour with the chiefs who were only too ready to aid them. These Moslem slavers scented mischief when Hinderer arrived, and they urged Abere and his council to expel them on the plea that " white men had made the people of Abeokuta like women, so that they no more went out to war." It was a lame excuse to urge so soon after the Egba defeat of the terrible Dahomian army, but it visibly moved the chiefs of Ibadan. One chief, however, an old councillor named Agbaki, who stood high in the confidence of Abere, rose and defended the white men in general and the missionary in particular, and he carried the day.

Although the chiefs and their soldiers and the slavers loved war, the common people, who were the sufferers, were longing for peace and security, and they listened readily to the message Hinderer brought to them. Often they greeted him with such exclamations as : " God bless you and help you, white man. You always speak words of peace, but our chiefs are for war. You must stay here and help us ; the chiefs will not listen to us, but they will listen to you." For three months he remained in the town, striving to win the confidence of chiefs and people alike. He was the one white man in all

their nearest missionary colleagues in Abeokuta, they laid the foundations of the future Yoruba Church.

Few missionary wives have ever given themselves more wholeheartedly to the work of the Mission than did Anna Hinderer. She was a great lover of children, and being without children of her own, she poured out the treasures of her love upon those of Africa. At first she found them shy; their curiosity compelled them to come near and watch her; but the moment she raised her head and looked at them, they ran from her "as though she were a serpent." But no children could fear her for long, and soon a little black maiden mustered up all her courage and brought the white lady a flower, holding it timidly at arm's length, and then ran away. Friendship grew rapidly after that, and Mrs. Hinderer organized games for the children each evening when the heat of the day was over. Instead of fearing her, they now rushed to seize her hands and hung on to them. They gave her the name of Iya (mother). She opened a day school, and so won the confidence of the chiefs and other people of Ibadan that they begged her to take their children into her own house and bring them up, a task into which she entered with eagerness. Motherless babies were brought to her and sometimes little slaves. Thus a boarding school developed, and this childless woman became the mother of many. No matter how her family of black boys and girls increased, she could always find

room in her heart and home for one more. Very beautiful is the story of one tiny slave boy who ran to her and said : " Iya, you can't kiss me because I'm black and you are white ! " She answered by folding him in her arms and showering kisses on him.

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While the Hinderers were toiling at their lonely station, events were bringing new opportunities around Abeokuta and Lagos. The missionary staff had been strengthened by the arrival of several new missionaries and also more Sierra Leonian catechists, one of the latter being Crowther's son. Like the Hinderers, Mr. and Mrs. Townsend took children into their house, and so urgently did the chiefs press them to take others that soon they had a family of two dozen under their care. Other missionaries took similar steps. This system of " families " led naturally to the development of more organized schools, especially boarding schools. More careful attention was given to education, and steps were taken to provide for the training of Egba catechists and teachers. During the same period another most important development was taking place. Henry Venn, the C.M.S. secretary responsible for West Africa, convinced of the importance of introducing into Africa industry and commerce, had sent cotton gins to Abeokuta, and by 1859 there were nearly 300 of them at work. As early as 1854 a printing press was set up in Abeokuta, and five years later it began to issue an African Christian

newspaper, the *Iwe Irohin*. At that time there were at least 3000 people who in C.M.S. schools had learned to read, and the missionaries felt it their duty to provide them with literature.

The growth of the Mission was such as to demand an episcopal visit, and towards the close of 1854 Bishop Vidal of Sierra Leone visited Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan, where he confirmed nearly 600 persons, ordained three new missionaries and two Africans, and held conferences with the workers at each station to discuss important questions of policy and method. Unfortunately he contracted malaria which developed immediately after sailing from Lagos on his return journey, and he died before the vessel reached Freetown. Five years later Abeokuta received its second episcopal visit, this time from Bishop Bowen, who opened a fine new church at Aké, confirmed 190 candidates, and ordained another missionary.

More frequent calls were now coming in to Abeokuta from surrounding places. One urgent message came from the chief of Ife, the sacred city of the whole Yoruba nation, situated three days' east of Abeokuta. It was, and still is, a stronghold of fetish worship. The people believe it to be a sort of Yoruba Olympus whence all the gods have come, and the birthplace of the whole human race. The great chief of Ife, called the Oni, sent to ask for Christian teachers, and, moreover, for a treaty between himself and the Egbas and their English allies. Another call came from the chief of Ketu,

a town of 10,000 inhabitants, sixty miles south-west of Abeokuta, asking that Crowther should visit them. The chief of Ijaye, two days to the north, sent so pressing a message that Townsend went to see him, and soon an out-station was established there with a missionary in charge. The policy of beginning with a strongly staffed central mission in Abeokuta was beginning to justify itself. Already the Egba metropolis was a beacon light for the whole country around, and from it new lights were being kindled.

But the decade we have been dealing with (*viz.*, 1850–60) witnessed a still more important extension movement in an entirely different direction, and that must now be dealt with in separate chapters.

VIII

A VOYAGE UP THE NIGER AND TSHADDA

1854

IN the midst of the development recorded in the last chapter there came a new call to the Niger itself.

The failure of the Government Niger Expedition of 1841 had for the time discouraged further effort, though the consul (Mr. Beecroft) had made a voyage up the river in 1845. Up to that time all exploration of the river had been attended with great loss of life.[1] But that noble-hearted Scottish merchant-prince Macgregor Laird could not banish from his mind the belief that the Niger could and *must* be opened to the influence of Christian civilization. His own expedition of 1832–3 had proved disastrous, both financially and in human life, forty out of the forty-nine Europeans having died. Undismayed, he began in the early 'fifties to make preparations for another attempt. Her Majesty's Government was sympathetic, but not prepared to undertake responsibility. So, at his own expense and risk, Laird fitted out a small steamer, the *Pleiad*, for the double purpose of exploration and trade, and the Government appointed several naval and other

[1] The expeditions of Mungo Park (1805), the Brothers Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird (1832–3), Beecroft (1836, 1840), the Government Expedition (1841), and Beecroft (1845).

officers to accompany the expedition, the chief of whom was Dr. W. B. Baikie, R.N. As the introduction of Christianity among the riverside tribes was an essential part of his project, Laird asked the C.M.S. to allow Crowther and the catechist Simon Jonas to accompany the expedition, offering them free passage on the *Pleiad*. Crowther was eager to go, and the C.M.S. Committee was only too glad to seize the opportunity.

On July 12, 1853, the little vessel crossed the bar at the mouth of the Nun. The water was considerably lower than it had been in 1841, and there was need for more careful navigation. Soundings had to be taken constantly and sometimes a launch was sent ahead to find the deep channels. From time to time the *Pleiad* struck sandbanks and had to be got off with the help of boats and canoes, a task that often proved extremely difficult. One feature of the expedition was the care taken to guard against sickness, and every day quinine was served out to all on board.

The first objective was the town of Abo, where the Obi had been so friendly and had signed the treaty with Captain Trotter. But the Obi was dead and there was a dispute as to his successor. One of the claimants, Tsukuma, a son of the late Obi, welcomed the visitors with cordiality. A palaver was held in public in the presence of a great throng of people, the white men and Crowther sitting on mats spread for them. So great was the excitement that even the chief failed to get silence and the

business had to proceed amid a babel of voices. Dr. Baikie reminded the chief and his councillors of the former visit thirteen years before, and of the treaty then signed. He assured them that the British still adhered to that agreement and that in seeking to fulfil it, the *Pleiad* had come to trade with them and renew the friendship. Tsukuma, in reply, affirmed that the old Obi, before he died, had particularly charged them not to deviate from the paths he had trod, and to preserve the friendship of the white man. The failure to trade was not *their* fault; it was the English who had not fulfilled their promise to come and trade. He was glad that they had come at last.

Then Crowther explained that one of the objects of their visit was to see if it were possible to establish a mission station at Abo as they had done at Lagos, Badagry, and Abeokuta. To this the chief replied that the words were good, too good for them to hope that they would be realized; he would not believe anything until he saw what it was proposed to do. The difficulty, he insisted, was not with the people of Abo, who were willing to be taught, but with the white men who for so many years had not fulfilled their promise. It was arranged, therefore, that the Ibo interpreter, Simon Jonas, should again be left at Abo[1] to teach the people until the return of the expedition to the sea.

The next stage was to visit Idda, eight days higher up the Niger. The reigning Atta was the

[1] See pp. 23, 28.

same man whom Crowther had met in 1841, and again there were the same provoking difficulties and delays owing to the local customs and etiquette. He remembered Captain Trotter's visit, and at once recognized Crowther. He also remembered the promises made to him thirteen years before, to send traders and teachers, and to organize the agricultural farm, and wanted to know why the white men had failed to fulfil their promise. It was explained to him that there had been difficulties, but that, so far from having forgotten their promise, the *Pleiad* had come expressly to trade with them, and had, moreover, brought Crowther to see what could be done to send them Christian teachers. Whereupon the Atta ordered his people to give shouts of joy to express their satisfaction. So anxious was he to detain the expedition that it was difficult to get away.

As the *Pleiad* slowly proceeded up-stream there were increasing signs of warfare among the tribes themselves, and the ever-present shadow of a still greater danger, the organized raids of the Fulani, the powerful Moslem conquerors from the Sudan. Originally a race of shepherds, they had imposed their rule upon the great peace-loving Hausa nation whose country lay to the north of the Niger and the Tshadda, a region then known as the Central Sudan.[1] They were notorious for their

[1] The Sudan is a great belt of country stretching across Africa, south of the Sahara and Egyptian deserts, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic.

slave-raiding proclivities, and were constantly attacking the pagan tribes of the Niger territories, sowing dissension among them and setting one tribe against another that they themselves might benefit by the unrest and turmoil. In their fear of the Fulani, some tribes had removed from one side of the river to the other, in order to be less exposed to sudden attack, and some had built new villages on the surrounding hills or on islands. So great was the fear of the Fula conqueror, named Dasaba, brother of the King of Rabba, that scarcely a village could be seen on the western bank of the river near the confluence.

Three days after leaving Idda, the expedition visited the site bought by Captain Trotter thirteen years before for a model farm. It was overgrown with trees and rank vegetation; instead of a garden, a wilderness. The people of the surrounding villages asked if the English intended to come again and occupy it, and Crowther assured them that one day they would do so.

Immediately opposite the site of the projected farm, the mouth of the Tshadda or Benué, the Niger's greatest tributary, opened out before the voyagers, and as they entered its broad stream the more important work of the expedition began. The chief task was to explore this great river and discover its possibilities. The water was rising[1] and the river presented the appearance of an extensive sheet

[1] At the confluence it rises as much as thirty feet in the wet season.

of water. As the *Pleiad* ascended, it was noticed that the tribes differed widely from those of the Niger. Many of the villages were squalid, and the people often dirty and less clothed. But here and there they came upon a chief of importance who sat clad in silk robes and kept considerable state. Everywhere there was the fear of the Fulani ; the people were timid and suspicious ; their spies were constantly on the alert and ready to scent the least approach of danger. Here and there were traces of quite recent raids. They came upon one wide area the entire population of which had been carried off to Sokoto as slaves for the sultan. Often it was difficult for the expedition to get into touch with the chiefs, and in some cases the whole population fled into the bush.

Usually it was Crowther, as an African and most familiar with the African mind, who undertook to open up negotiations, carefully sending the interpreters first to announce his coming, a point of etiquette almost universal in West Africa. Sometimes, on landing, he noticed around him men armed with spears and bows and arrows ready for any emergency, but his tact removed their fears. He always felt that allowance had to be made for the perpetual fear under which they lived, and he believed that many European explorers mistook nervous caution and suspicion for hostility. But sometimes even Crowther could not establish friendly relations with a chief, especially those more directly under Fulani influence. At many places they heard

of the great cities of Kano and Sokoto, and the powerful emirs who ruled over millions of people.

Passing beyond the points reached by previous expeditions, the *Pleiad* steamed cautiously up the splendid waterway to regions where the people were "the most degraded and uncivilized" Crowther had ever seen. For over seven weeks they went forward until they reached a place 350 miles from the confluence.[1] Then they had to face an unsurmountable obstacle : they could no longer obtain wood for the furnaces of the ship. But even then the indomitable Baikie would not return until he, with one Englishman and a few Africans, had gone still higher in a couple of open boats.

On the return journey to the confluence, much country was under water, and villages previously visited were flooded. Navigation was difficult, and at one place the *Pleiad* stuck so fast that it seemed impossible to move her. A terrific tornado with torrents of rain added to the difficulty, and the force of wind and current drove the ship deeper into the mud. For three days all their efforts were in vain, and it seemed as though she must be abandoned. But at last the steadily-rising waters aided the efforts of the officers and crew, and the gallant little vessel reached the confluence after a cruise of 101 days. Steadily they sailed down the mighty Niger, touching again Idda, and a riverside market called Onitsha.[2] They

[1] Two hundred and fifty miles beyond any previous expedition.

[2] Onitsha itself they did not see, for it lay inland. In those days, there was merely a canoe landing and a market at the riverside.

picked up Simon Jonas at Abo, and found he had done good introductory work and secured the friendship of the people, who were eager to retain him. The chiefs offered a site for a mission station, and it was definitely marked off ; but Crowther's practical eye perceived that Abo would never do for European missionaries, for the whole town was flooded by the rising of the river, and large market canoes were paddling along the streets. He, however, promised the chiefs that with as little delay as possible he would send one or two teachers to live among them.

On November 7, with cheers of joy, the *Pleiad* crossed the bar and stood out to sea. For the first time on record an African expedition had fulfilled its mission without the loss of a single life. It was proved that by taking proper precautions and using quinine freely, it was possible for Europeans to venture up the river for short periods. From every point of view the attempt had been successful. They had found that for at least 600 miles up the Niger and Tshadda there was a navigable waterway, and that the people were, on the whole, friendly and eager to trade.

Nor was the expedition less encouraging from the point of view of Crowther and the C.M.S. Here was a magnificent highway to the very heart of Africa. To them it was a reconnaissance to be followed up as quickly as possible by definite missionary occupation. Never for a moment did Crowther doubt that this would be the mind of his

Committee, and throughout the voyage he had done a great deal of valuable preparatory work on the riverside languages. He had prepared long lists of words and phrases, and with the help of the interpreters (most of whom were C.M.S. teachers from Sierra Leone) he had carefully collected the equivalents in the principal vernaculars. In presenting his report to the Committee, he urged the immediate undertaking of a River Mission, and he enforced it with this irresistible plea :—

> God has provided instruments to begin the work, in the liberated Africans of Sierra Leone, who are natives of the banks of this river. If this time is allowed to pass away, the generation of liberated teachers who are immediately connected with the present generation of the natives of the interior will pass away with it. Many intelligent men who took deep interest in the introduction of trade and Christianity to the Niger, who had been known to the people, have died since ; so have many of the chiefs and people of the country, who were no less interested to be brought into connexion with England by seeing their liberated countrymen return. Had not Simon Jonas been with us, who was well known to Obi and his sons, we should have had some difficulty in gaining the confidence of the people at Abo. . . . It takes great effect when a returning liberated Christian sits down with his heathen countrymen . . . and invites them, in his own language, with refined Christian feelings and sympathy, not to be expressed in words but evidenced in an exemplary Christian life.

IX

CROWTHER FOUNDS THE NIGER MISSION

1857–1864

THE C.M.S. was fully prepared to enter upon a mission to the Niger. The main difficulty was that of access, for there were no regular steamers plying on the river beyond the delta. Macgregor Laird had lost so much money on the *Pleiad* expedition that he did not feel able to undertake another. The British Government had its hands full with the Crimean war, and the general public, even the mercantile public, were apathetic. This time it lay with the C.M.S. to make the move. In 1856, soon after the conclusion of peace, the Committee laid a memorial before Lord Palmerston, and this resulted in an agreement between the Government and Laird to send up the river a small screw steamer, the *Dayspring*. Her total length was only seventy-six feet, and her gross tonnage seventy-seven tons. At her bows she carried the figure of a dove with an olive leaf, a fitting symbol of her errand. Again Dr. Baikie was in command with Lieutenant Glover as captain of the vessel. Crowther was to accompany the expedition with a band of African workers to be stationed along the river.

The plan was to follow the main stream of the Niger to Rabba, whence Baikie and Crowther were

to travel overland to visit the great Fula Sultan of Sokoto, the capital of the Fulani Empire.

The planting of the Niger Mission gave Crowther the opportunity of his life, and very careful were the preparations he made. His chief helper was an African clergyman, the Rev. J. C. Taylor, a son of slave parents of the Ibo tribe. Simon Jonas was also to go, together with a few other catechists from Freetown. The intention was to station these workers at Abo, Idda, the farm, and elsewhere. But Crowther's purview also extended to the great Moslem areas of the Sudan, Rabba, Bida, Kano, and Sokoto. As no convert from Islam was available, he took the remarkable course of selecting a liberated Yoruba slave, still a Moslem, who was a teacher of Arabic and full of gratitude to both the British Government and the C.M.S. for all they had done for him. Crowther believed that " such a man will do a vast deal in softening the bigotry and prejudice of men by his persuasion." And he added this note :—

> The beginning of our missionary operations under Muhammedan government should not be disputes about the truth or the falsehood of one religion or another ; but we should aim at toleration, to be permitted to teach their heathen subjects the religion we profess.

In July the *Dayspring* entered the Niger. The expedition began with a disappointment. Simon Jonas was to be stationed at Abo to carry on the work he had begun in 1841 and 1854. But the young chief, Aje, had deteriorated into an insolent

and rapacious ruffian, and it was manifestly wiser to try how things stood elsewhere. At Onitsha, on the eastern side of the Niger, the outlook was more promising. It proved to be a good-sized town, lying two or three miles from the river, and being about 100 feet above the high water mark was in no danger of such inundations as Crowther had witnessed at Abo on his previous visit.

The chief of Onitsha and his councillors welcomed their visitors cordially, and readily gave sites for a trading factory and a mission. As in so many African tribes, the rudiments of democracy were not unknown, and the chief, before pledging his word to the white man, turned to the crowd of men and women who thronged his compound and asked if they concurred. With loud cries and the firing of muskets they signified that the proposal was "carried unanimously," and one man stepped forward to voice the approval of the crowd.

Here, then, the Niger Mission was founded. Dwellings were secured, Mr. Taylor and Simon Jonas were stationed, and three young Christian Sierra Leonians also elected to make Onitsha their home. Thus the Mission began entirely with African effort and an African staff.

The need for the Christian Gospel was strikingly manifest, even while the expedition was at Onitsha. After his first night on shore, Simon Jonas went back to the *Dayspring* to tell Crowther that a human sacrifice was shortly to be offered, and that the victim, a slave woman, would be put to death when

the visitors left. Crowther sternly denounced the sin, and succeeded in saving one human life.

Passing on to Idda, now under a new chief, there was the old difficulty concerning etiquette, and so vexatious were the delays that the *Dayspring* went on to Gbebe, near to the confluence, where another teacher was stationed. Here, as elsewhere, we find the intrepid pioneer expounding to the people the meaning of the Christian message and his purpose in planting a mission in their midst. Then the *Dayspring* went on again to the mouth of another tributary, the Kaduna, on the north side of the Niger. As this river appeared to be navigable, and seemed to lead towards the great Moslem camp at Bida, the centre of Fulani rule along the Niger, it was decided to explore it. For a whole day the little vessel steamed cautiously up, until at sunset she reached the ruins of Gbara, the ancient capital of the great Nupé kingdom. Like so many other places, it had been laid waste by the Fulani, and it chanced that one of the *Dayspring*'s interpreters recognized it as the old home from which he had been kidnapped forty-five years before. Listen to the story of that invasion and desolation as told by an aged man to a modern traveller. Swinging his finger round the horizon, he told the things he had, as a boy, heard from his father :—

Farm land was everywhere. There was no shelter for elephants or flocks of antelopes, because our hunters drew every river glade. Towns both great and small covered the face of the land and thousands of people gathered in the market squares. Folk from Ilorin (far

to the south of the Niger) came to us to purchase grain and clothing. They came from Kano (300 miles to the north) and did the like. Oxen were slaughtered daily in all the markets, and every evening the elderly drank their beer. No man went hungry, but all men worked. The men went to the farms and laboured. The women went to the markets and toiled. All the people of the Sudan said: "The Nupetchi are the richest of all mankind." Thus our fathers before us spake to us old men. But then came the Fulbe (*i.e.* Fulani) as Monafiki (*i.e.* instigators, traitors, cheats) into the land. Our young men were sold into slavery. Our women were dragged to their camps. Nothing but grass was grown on the farms. The apes stole the last ears of maize. The looms fell to pieces. The towns were wasted with fire. Foreign thieves (*i.e.* Fulani) built their nests in the farmsteads. The Fulbe slaughtered our beeves. They struck off the heads of our kings and set them on boards in the markets. Our smiths were only allowed to make handcuffs for the wrists of our fathers when they were driven away.

Crowther and his fellow travellers must have listened to many such tales from the lips of men and women who had taken part in the tragedy. Even to-day, traces of that awful drama may be found when old bushland is cleared and remains of the relentless destruction are laid bare. Both Baikie and Crowther were anxious to visit the great Fula king, Sumo Zaki, and his half-brother Dasaba, in their famous camp at Bida; Baikie in the hope of getting into touch with them on behalf of the British Government, Crowther because he felt how important it would be for his mission to secure promise of security and protection from such powerful rulers. So they sent messengers to announce their approach, and with true Moslem courtesy the king sent horses for the use of his distinguished guests.

At dawn one morning Baikie and Crowther reached the immense camp and found multitudes of Moslem warriors engaged at their prayers. In African travels, there are few experiences more impressive than to come suddenly at sunrise or sunset, upon a company of Moslems at worship and to hear, rising from the bush, the low rhythmic sound of the Arabic prayers. In striking contrast to that scene of worship, Crowther chanced upon the market place and there found numbers of slaves for sale. At that moment a woman and her baby were being sold for 70,000 cowries (*i.e.* about £7).

With considerable ceremony the representatives of Christian civilization were led into the presence of the Fula king. He received them with every kindness and respect, offered them seats on mats already spread for them, and with characteristic Moslem piety declared that he owed the favour of their visit, not to his own goodness, but to God's mercy. If such words seem strange on the lips of the man who had devastated hundreds of square miles of country, we must remind ourselves that African nature is full of strange contrasts and that in such chiefs, whether Moslem or pagan, a perfectly sincere courtesy and piety and utter ferocity are but different aspects of the same nature.

In dealing with such a man as Sumo Zaki, Crowther knew quite well that the first step was to establish friendly feelings, and his policy of having with him the Moslem interpreter justified itself.

The king and his chiefs were surprised to find one of their own co-religionists come to them in the company of Christians, and they questioned him eagerly, hearing with some surprise of the kindness he had received at the hands of the British. All this prepared the way for Crowther, but he knew that it would be worse than useless to begin by asking permission to preach the Christian religion to Moslems. With true African tact, therefore, the messenger of Jesus introduced himself as a *mallam* (teacher), sent by the great mallams of the white man's country, to see the state of the heathen population and to know the mind of the rulers, whether he might teach those people the religion of *Anasara* (Jesus) and also introduce trade among them.

To this the king agreed and even offered to give a place for a station at Rabba, a little higher up the Niger. Dasaba, the king's half-brother and co-ruler, however, seemed to treat the mission as a huge joke and literally rolled on his mat with glee and laughter. All ended happily, and the usual kola nuts were broken and eaten together as a symbol of friendship. But as they rode away from the camp, Crowther knew that it would not take much to change the whole aspect of affairs ; a few false reports, a few seeds of suspicion, and Sumo Zaki's lower nature would be aroused and easily inflamed against the Christians. Still, Crowther felt that he had made the most of the opportunity.

On leaving the Fula king, the expedition returned down the Kaduna and continued its voyage

up the Niger to Rabba which is on the north bank. For a time it had been the head-quarters of Sumo Zaki and Dasaba. Its importance was mainly due to the fact that it was the crossing place for caravans travelling between Kano, the centre of Hausa commerce, and Ilorin, the chief Moslem stronghold south of the Niger.

At Rabba, Crowther met men who were able to throw light on the death of Mungo Park and his companions, fifty years before, when their boat the *Joliba* was wrecked among the rocks at Bussa. The *Dayspring* steamed gaily on, her company little dreaming that a similar fate awaited their own vessel.

They had steered safely through the narrow channels beside Jebba Island. The great fetish rock reared its huge form above them, rising like a pinnacle with almost sheer precipices from the river. Suddenly, with a crash that shook her from stem to stern, the *Dayspring* struck a submerged rock. Disabled, and leaking badly, she drifted for a few minutes, then jammed upon other rocks and lay a helpless wreck. The great spirit that dwelt in the rock was avenged upon the white men who had dared invade his dominions ; the people of the neighbourhood said that he was offended by the colour of the clothes they wore ! But, unlike the *Joliba*, the sinking *Dayspring* was not surrounded with enemies. Dug-out canoes swiftly put out to her assistance ; with their help the whole ship's company reached the bank in safety, and were also able to save a few things of importance. Darkness

fell swiftly upon them, and during the night there was a violent tornado ; the survivors had little but their raincoats to protect them. At dawn they set off in dug-outs to examine their precious little *Dayspring*, but she was seen to be a hopeless wreck, quite beyond possibility of repair in such a place, and Lieutenant Glover was compelled to come to the decision to abandon her.[1] The whole party returned by canoes to Rabba to wait for relief. They were aware that another vessel, the *Sunbeam*, was to follow the *Dayspring* up the river at an interval of a few months, and they hoped that, if all went well with her, she would pick them up and take them back to the coast.

More than a year passed before the looked-for relief came. But to such men the time was not wasted. Glover, in canoes, carefully surveyed the river and several tributaries ; Baikie visited the chiefs and entered into friendly negotiations with regard to future trade, and Crowther eagerly examined the possibilities of the district as a mission centre. Rabba itself offered fine facilities. The very fact of its position as a caravan centre presented splendid opportunities. Some of those caravans passing between Kano and Ilorin were several thousands strong, with hundreds of heads of cattle.

[1] Her remains can still be seen at low water, lying near Jebba rock. After she was abandoned, the natives carried into the bush her crank-shaft, engine, and propeller, apparently to use as fetishes, and they were found on Jebba Island in 1916 when the engineers were constructing the railway bridge that now spans the Niger. They are exhibited on Jebba railway station.

The ferrying of such numbers across the broad water of the Niger necessarily occasioned delay, and that very delay would enable mission workers to sow among them the seeds of Christian truth. With permission of the chiefs, Crowther obtained a piece of land on which to build five conical huts after the style of the locality, surrounding them with a palisade.

Purchasing a large dug-out canoe, he fitted it up with seats for half-a-dozen passengers in addition to the canoe men, and gave to it the name of *Mission Canoe*. When finished, this *canoe de luxe* was re-launched in the presence of an admiring crowd, and in it Crowther made visits to numerous villages on both sides of the Niger. Nor was he less active in visiting places that lay inland from the river, sometimes making quite considerable journeys and running no small risks from dangers of all kinds, including here and there a village chief or headman who turned out to be greedy or treacherous. Sickness visited that little band of refugees and death also, the purser falling a victim to dysentery.[1] Two other incidents are too interesting to be passed over : it was found possible to send a messenger with letters *overland* to Abeokuta ; and one day an American Baptist missionary, the Rev. M. Clark, arrived, having travelled from Abeokuta ; he brought with him news of the Indian Mutiny and

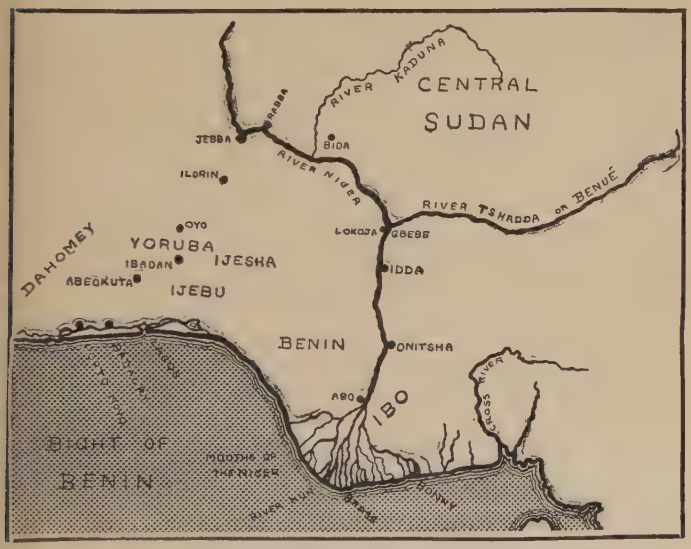
[1] Two other members of the *Dayspring*'s company had died before she was wrecked : the mate and one of the crew, a South Sea slander.

was able to spare the refugees some sugar, tea, and coffee.

The long sojourn at Rabba gave Crowther splendid opportunities for studying the Nupé language, and also for personal conversation with numbers of Moslems, many of whom he found prepared to talk quietly about Christianity. He was convinced that these people could, and should, be reached by the messengers of Jesus.

At last in October, 1858, the long-looked-for *Sunbeam* arrived, and the whole party embarked and travelled down the mighty river. Crowther himself elected to leave the vessel at Onitsha in order to spend some time with the workers there. He found that success had attended the efforts of Mr. Taylor and the others, and already there was a small company of converts. Sometimes in the market place, as many as a thousand people listened to the preaching. After inspecting the work at Onitsha, the dauntless Crowther, instead of making for home, again ascended the Niger, this time in a dug-out canoe, a slow, wearying method after his former voyages by steamboats. He had a plan of his own to work out. His experience had taught him the uncertainty of steamboats on the river. If a mission was to be maintained, some more regular and reliable, if slower method must be found. He resolved to try canoes. It was not easy. He had trouble with the canoe men, who from time to time demanded more money and used threats to enforce their demands, only to find that Crowther could

not be browbeaten. Back he went to Idda, then to the confluence, and then to Rabba. The arrival of the American missionary overland, and the sending of his own messenger to Abeokuta, during his year at Rabba, had made Crowther resolve to explore that "overland route" for himself, realizing that it might prove the easiest and most sure way from Lagos to the Upper Niger, and therefore important for the future development of the Mission.



SKETCH MAP SHOWING BISHOP CROWTHER'S JOURNEYS

So after a brief rest (and a little work) in Rabba, he set out on his first long land journey, a distance of some three hundred miles. The exposure and worry of the canoe journey up the river had brought on an attack of dysentery, and he was far from well,

but he pushed steadily on with his face towards the sun, over the hills and through the long grass of the Nupé Country to Ilorin, and then through the forests of his Yoruba homeland till the rocks of Abeokuta rose high before him. He was the first member of the C.M.S. to make the overland journey between the coast and the river that afterwards became frequent. On reaching Abeokuta, he found that the Bishop of Sierra Leone had just arrived, and with him was Dr. Baikie ; they had come up the Ogun from Lagos. Crowther himself speedily went to Lagos to meet his wife and family whom he had left there and from whom he had been separated for two years.

But he could no longer regard Lagos or Abeokuta as his post ; the Niger was his God-appointed sphere and from that time his life was dedicated to its evangelization. In the summer of 1859 he once more went up the river, this time on the *Rainbow*, another vessel sent by Macgregor Laird for purposes of trade. He visited the workers at Onitsha, called at Idda, and intended to go on to Rabba. But at the confluence he received a brief message from Dr. Baikie (who had gone overland from Abeokuta) telling him that for the present Rabba was closed to missionary operations. No explanation was given, but knowing the situation as he did, Crowther concluded that his own fears had been realized and that enemies had succeeded in poisoning the minds of the rulers against the messengers of the Gospel. Sumo Zaki was dead ; Dasaba, the famous slave

raider, the man who had laughed so uproariously at the idea of missionaries, had become King of Nupé, and was building the city of Bida where the great camp had been ; it was quite understandable that *he* had no use for missionaries. Though disappointed, Crowther found ground for encouragement at Gbebe where, as well as at Onitsha, converts were being prepared for baptism. Unfortunately the voyage ended in tragedy. As the *Rainbow* passed down the narrow waterways of the Delta, she was treacherously fired upon from the matted undergrowth of the banks and two of her crew were killed. This incident again delayed the establishment of regular steamboat services and the river was closed for two years. Then, in January, 1861, Macgregor Laird died ; his vessels were withdrawn and his trading posts closed.

During this period of suspense Crowther was often anxious about the lonely workers up the river. But he was undaunted, and with the concurrence of the Committee in London he was laying plans for work on a much larger scale. By August, 1862, he was at the mouth of the Nun with a party of thirty-three African workers (including wives and children) ready to go up the Niger. They were taken up by a gun-boat, H.M.S. *Investigator*. At Gbebe, at the mouth of the Tshadda, a great joy awaited the pioneer : a company of people were now ready for baptism. One September morning, in the presence of two hundred people in the little mud chapel, he baptized eight adults and one child, the firstfruits

of the Niger Mission. The service was the more significant in that the persons who received baptism represented several different tribes. In his joy Crowther wrote : " Is not this an anticipation of the immense field opened to the Church to occupy for Christ ? " Nor was it less notable that the first baptisms took place, not near the mouth of the river but 250 miles upstream, at the confluence, the meeting place not only of the great waters but also of great peoples, the pagans of the south and the Moslems of the Sudan, and almost exactly in the geographic centre of the vast area that now comprises the Nigeria Mission of the C.M.S.

With his new workers, Crowther was able to staff the station at Gbebe and begin industrial work for the purpose of preparing, cleaning, and packing cotton for export to England. While Crowther was there the Fula king Dasaba sent messengers, really spies, to see what he was doing, and they were not a little surprised at the wonders of the industrial school with its western machinery. Crowther sent them back to tell the king what they had seen, and to ask him to judge whether such efforts were injurious to the prosperity of Africa or favourable to its peace and welfare.

. . . . . .

By this time the Committee of the C.M.S. was beginning to face a very important question with regard to the Niger Mission. There was only one bishop in West Africa, the Bishop of Sierra Leone, nearly two thousand miles away. He might

occasionally visit Lagos and Abeokuta to conduct confirmations and ordinations and generally supervise the work ; but it would be utterly impossible for him to take charge of the river mission also. If the Niger Mission were to be established and develop, as there appeared every possibility that it would, there must be a bishop in charge. Yet all experience tended to show that Europeans could not, with any degree of safety, live on the Niger.

It was Henry Venn, at that time secretary for the West African field, who found the solution of this problem : the Niger Mission had begun as a purely African enterprise, pioneered, staffed, and directed by men of Negro race ; let it continue so under the guidance of an African bishop, Crowther. The proposal was revolutionary. All sorts of obstacles at once presented themselves, and many who knew Africans considered the experiment too risky. Crowther was admittedly an exceptional man ; could the young West African Church reasonably be expected to produce a *successor* as good ? Venn overcame all the difficulties. He won the approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in turn secured the approval of Her Majesty's Government, and in due course the Royal License was issued for the consecration of " Our trusty and well beloved Samuel Adjai Crowther, clerk in Holy Orders, to be a bishop of the Church of England in the West African territories beyond the British Dominions."

Having secured this, Venn set to work to obtain for the bishop-elect a degree, that nothing might

be lacking to give him standing and prestige ; and at his recommendation, and on the grounds of Crowther's work on the Yoruba Grammar, Yoruba and English Dictionary, and Yoruba versions of many books of the Bible, plus reasonable scholastic attainments, the University of Oxford conferred upon him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity.

On St. Peter's Day (June 29), 1864, in Canterbury Cathedral, Crowther, the ex-slave boy, was solemnly consecrated Bishop of the Niger Territories. Close by, dressed in full naval uniform, sat Admiral Sir H. Leeke who, forty-two years before, had rescued him from the stinking hold of the slave ship in Lagos lagoon. And not far away sat an old lady, widow of Bishop Weeks of Sierra Leone, who quietly remarked to an officious sidesman who challenged her right to be there : " I think I have a right to this seat, for I taught Mr. Crowther his alphabet."

Crowther was the first man of colour to be advanced to a bishopric in modern times.

X

A PERIOD OF TROUBLE AND DISAPPOINTMENT

1860–1880

WE must now return to the story of Abeokuta and the Yoruba Mission. In a previous chapter we have noticed that the 'fifties formed a period of steady growth and expansion. With equal truth the following decade may be described as one of set-back and disappointment. The good Alake, Sagbua, had passed away and his death was a great blow to the Mission. Clouds gathered round the churches, still in their spiritual infancy, and troubles developed within.

The year 1860 had scarcely opened when news reached Abeokuta that another Dahomian attack was impending. After a reign of forty years, the great Gezo was dead, and there were good reasons for supposing that before he passed away he had given to Gelele, his son and successor, solemn charge to avenge upon the Egbas the great disaster of 1851. The new king had "watered his father's grave" with human sacrifices—rumour said 2000—and now came a report that he would march upon Abeokuta.

One Sunday in February, 1861, as the Christians were at their worship, news was brought that the Dahomian army was close upon the town. But smallpox broke out in the enemy's ranks and they

were compelled to retire. Thirteen months later (March 15, 1862), however, a Dahomian army six thousand strong swooped suddenly down upon Issagga, a few miles from Abeokuta, and avenged the part its inhabitants had played in the former attack. The chief was slain, and among many victims carried off there were upwards of twenty Christians, including the catechist in charge of the station. One of these Christians was publicly crucified in Abomey, and others were killed or sold as slaves. For four years the catechist remained in captivity, and when at last released he told that often the Dahomian king had made him read before him the Christian Scriptures.[1] Exactly a year later to the very day, March 15, 1863, the Dahomians attacked Igbara, another small Egba town, completely destroying it and carrying off many captives. No wonder the Egbas were on tenterhooks !

. . . . . .

Meanwhile, troubles of a very different kind had developed in the Yoruba Country, serious quarrels between the people of Ibadan and those of the neighbouring town of Ijaye. Vindictive messages and haughty challenges passed between them. A calabash was sent to Ibadan with the modest request that it would be returned with the head of one of the chiefs in it. Whereupon another calabash was sent to Ijaye with the words : " We want the

[1] Gelele (like his father Gezo) had come under the magnetic influence of Thomas Birch Freeman, and this may account for his curious interest in Christianity.

head of chief Aré in this calabash first" ! The forest paths between the two tribes were closed, and kidnappers were sent out to pounce upon any persons who ventured to work on the farms.

Then actual war was proclaimed, and the Hinderers were horrified to learn that a human sacrifice was to be offered for a successful issue. A fine, handsome young man, twenty-five or thirty years of age, was selected and paraded through Ibadan that all might see how splendid a victim was to be offered. Mrs. Hinderer wrote : " Some of our people who saw him say that he looked proud of the honour that awaited him. From being a poor slave, he is all but worshipped and has the power of saying and doing all he likes except escaping his death in the evening. But, poor fellow, he believes all kinds of glory await him in the other world." At the moment he was killed all the people in the great market place prostrated themselves to pray for victory, and after feasting and rejoicing the army set out to battle. It pained the gentle spirit of Anna Hinderer to find that the body of the victim of that sacrifice was tended by the women with great honour, being rubbed with oils and decorated in the belief that his spirit would be reincarnated as an infant and become a mighty king. Hundreds of women paid honour to the headless corpse, each in the hope that she might be the mother of the coming babe.

It was one of those internecine wars that had for many years devastated the whole Yoruba Country, and through which the once powerful " King of all

the Yorubas" had been reduced to a position of no importance with little more than an empty title of royalty. The war between Ibadan and Ijaye soon involved other tribes also. The Egbas, remembering what they had in the past suffered from Ibadan, aided the people of Ijaye, blockaded the paths between Ibadan and Abeokuta, and kidnapped any Ibadan people who came within their reach. For the mission, the position was complicated by the fact that Ijaye had become an outpost, the Rev. and Mrs. A. Mann being stationed there.

The position of the Hinderers and their colleague Mr. Jeffries now became one of great isolation and privation. They were cut off from their co-workers in Abeokuta and it was difficult to get messages or supplies through. For months the devoted missionaries in Ibadan had no communication with the outer world.[1] With their family of children to provide for anxieties multiplied. Supplies of cowries began to run short, and there was little chance of replenishing the stock. David Hinderer was in poor health and could not have the nourishment he needed. There was plenty of food in the town, but without cowries they could not purchase it ; Mrs. Hinderer wrote these brave words :—

> Our living is rather poor—we cook yams in all sorts of ways to make them palatable. I can eat palaver sauce and beans ; D. cannot, but he likes Indian cornflour made into porridge, so feeds fairly

[1] Mrs. Hinderer wrote : " This letter, if it reaches you, will have gone from here to Lagos such a roundabout way ; twenty-five days' journey at least, instead of three."

well. . . . Here we all are—ourselves, Mr. Jeffries, our school, our native teacher, in all seventy persons—and every one has for more than two months eaten from our store of cowries. That store is now nearly exhausted, though we only allow our two selves a penny-worth of meat in our soup . . . and pinching the salt as if it were gold dust.

Three months later they had to send away all the children who had homes to go to, and the Hinderers rationed themselves to a handful of beans each day. They were reduced to taking such little personal possessions as they had to the market to barter them for food, and in these markets Yorubas can drive hard bargains! Everything that could be spared went in this way, article by article. Again and again the house was ransacked in the hope of finding some little things that previously escaped notice, empty tin match boxes, old biscuit boxes, the zinc lining of packing cases. Things put aside as lumber were now regarded as treasures to be turned into food. Sometimes there were seasonable little gifts from African friends, but the handful of converts were too poor to help much. The *bale*, or head chief, who might have helped them as his own "strangers" and entitled to his hospitality, had been smitten with paralysis and was helpless; the other chiefs were too intent on the war to think of them, and the heathen people as a whole cared little what the white people were suffering, though there were exceptions.

After over a year of war restrictions, Mr. Hinderer made a desperate effort to secure supplies. With two boys he contrived to get through the Ijebu Country to Lagos where he purchased provisions. Sudden

illness prevented his returning with a small caravan of traders, a providential intervention, surely, for the caravan was overwhelmed by the Ijebus ; some of the men were killed or captured, and of Hinderer's precious stores only one head-load reached Ibadan. The attack was really an effort to capture the missionary, for the Ijebu king had set a price on his head, and had even sent a message to Lagos to the effect that if Hinderer attempted to journey back to Ibadan through the Ijebu Country he would surely cut off his head. A similar message was also sent to the British consul in Lagos. But in spite of the threat, Hinderer went back to Ibadan, and went through Ijebu, that being the only possible way. When the Ijebu king heard that his intended victim had reached Ibadan in safety, he declared that only the white man's God could have delivered him. During the eight weeks of separation Anna Hinderer had passed through agonies of suspense on behalf of her husband. But the trials called out devotion, and we find the African Christians meeting for a prayer meeting at six o'clock every morning.

At last in March, 1862, after just two years of war, the men of Ibadan struck a decisive blow at their foes. Ijaye was captured and destroyed, desolation and ruin marked the place where there had been a prosperous town of over 50,000 people. Mr. and Mrs. Mann got away safely the day before the town was taken, but Mr. Roper, a lay missionary, who insisted on remaining, was captured and brought to Ibadan with other prisoners and subjected

to great cruelty. Hinderer tried to obtain his release, but the ransom demanded by the chiefs was prohibitive. Eventually they allowed him to live with the Hinderers on parole. The missionaries hoped that the fall of Ijaye would bring peace, but it did not. The Ijebus now began active hostilities against Ibadan and the Hinderers were still isolated.

At the close of the year (1862) Captain J. P. L. Davis, accompanied by the Rev. J. A. Lamb of Lagos and the Rev. G. F. Bühler from Abeokuta, succeeded in visiting them, in an effort to bring about negotiations for peace. The attempt was unsuccessful, but it greatly cheered the Hinderers and Mr. Jeffries, who for a further period of two years and a half endured what was practically a state of siege. The Acting-Governor of Lagos,[1] Captain Glover, R.N. (formerly commander of the ill-fated *Dayspring*), made several efforts to relieve them, but on three occasions when he attempted to do so, the King of Ijebu absolutely refused to allow him to pass through his country. Thus the weary years passed, and missionary work could only be carried on under severest restrictions. Sometimes converts failed and had to be disciplined ; sometimes candidates for baptism had to be put back because they were unsatisfactory. But the pure, unselfish lives of the workers witnessed to the love of God. Even in those years of privation Anna Hinderer's heart went out to the children, and when she came across an abandoned baby left helpless in the bush, and no one

[1] Lagos had in 1861 been annexed as a British possession.

in the whole town dared to take it in, she, without hesitation, took it to her mother heart and home. Both she and her husband constantly suffered from ill health ; yet they stood heroically at their posts, until, in April, 1865, Captain Maxwell (sent by Glover) found a new route through the bush to Ibadan and conveyed Mrs. Hinderer in a hammock to the coast. Hinderer himself remained at Ibadan, feeling it would be disastrous to leave the station unoccupied, until at last he was relieved by Mr. and Mrs. Smith from Badagry. After five such years, furlough was sorely needed.

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When viewed from the standpoint of Abeokuta, the Ibadan-Ijaye-Ijebu wars presented themselves in a different light. The Egbas, knowing that they were envied by the surrounding tribes because of their commercial prosperity, had yielded to the selfish impulse to close the roads to the coast, thus cutting the Ibadan and other people off from trade with Lagos with a view to keeping the trade in their own hands. The Egbas were born traders, intent on commerce with England and not a little proud of their relations with her ; the Ibadans were their old enemies and rivals, and it was not unnatural that the Egbas should take advantage of Ibadan's war-time weakness. The Egbas for some time had indulged in various little wars in several directions, some of which were virtually slave raids. In the midst of these disturbances more than one human sacrifice had been offered. Captain Glover, who was

always disposed to be unfriendly towards the Egbas, strongly opposed the closing of the roads. Intent upon the promotion of commerce over as wide an area as possible, he denounced the Egba policy and supported Ibadan. This attitude was resented by the Egbas who could not understand why Captain Glover sympathized with their foes. For twenty years the Egbas had regarded England as their friend and protector and could not see why her representative should turn against them. Moreover, several things in Glover's policy and attitude towards them led them to suspect that their own independence was threatened, a point upon which they were naturally sensitive.

This strained situation renewed an old peril to Abeokuta. The Dahomians, thinking that the Egbas were abandoned by their English friends and ringed around with enemies, made another attempt upon the city that had so often eluded their grasp. The king, in ordering the expedition, gave emphatic orders that Abeokuta must be utterly destroyed and all Christians, black or white, put to the sword. In view of this, Captain Glover ordered all Europeans to come to Lagos ; but the missionaries heroically refused to leave their people in their time of need. Then Glover took the unwise step of ordering a blockade of Abeokuta and forbade the sending of war materials to them, a form of assistance previously given by the British officers at Lagos. This aroused to still higher pitch the feeling of the Egbas, for it seemed to imply that England was not

merely leaving them to their fate, but actually playing into the hands of their cruel foes. The news of the impending Dahomian attack reached England and aroused deepest anxiety in C.M.S. and other Christian circles, and much prayer was offered.

Early in March, 1863, the Dahomian Sennacherib approached Abeokuta, confident of his power to destroy it. Seven miles from the city, he established a great war camp two miles in length, and for a fortnight the greatest fear and anxiety prevailed among the defenders. More than once the tidings came that the attack was about to begin, and every man and boy capable of bearing arms rushed to their places on the walls. The Christians within the walls were praying, almost in desperation, that God would deliver them from the cruel fate that overshadowed them. Then, to the utter amazement of every one, the Dahomian army quietly withdrew and went back home without attacking. The reason for that strange retreat remained a mystery. The Rev. G. F. Bühler wrote :—

> I consider the retreat of the Dahomians as one of the greatest victories the Church of God has obtained by prayer. The King of Dahomey has not come into this city, nor has he shot an arrow here . . . by the way that he came, by that same way has he returned. There is great rejoicing among all people, and many heathen acknowledge that it is the arm of the Lord.

A year later (March, 1864), another Dahomian army, 10,000 strong, appeared before the walls of Abeokuta. The attack was sharp and decisive, the brunt of it falling upon that part of the defences

where the Christian Egbas were stationed to defend their lives and homes. Again the enemy was driven off after heavy fighting, and they are said to have lost the flower of their army.

Perhaps it was this victory that intoxicated the Egbas and led them to foolish acts of aggression, for in consort with the Ijebu tribe they laid siege to the town of Ikorodu on the lagoon behind Lagos, and this led Captain Glover to send a small force to disperse them. Deeply distressed at the increasing bitterness between his beloved Egbas and the British, Townsend begged Glover to allow him to negotiate between the two. The attempt was futile, for the Governor laid down such terms as only increased the resentment of the Abeokuta chiefs. The Alake was dead, and an interregnum period gave opportunity for division and lawlessness. Malcontents got the upper hand, and men who had formerly profited by the slave trade urged the Egbas to assert themselves and oppose the encroachment of the British. The position of the missionaries became very difficult in the face of increasing prejudice against Europeans, and it was even rumoured that they were betraying the Egbas to their enemies. Agitators played on the fears and suspicions of the people, and kindled their passions.

On Sunday, October 13, 1867, the storm broke, and popular indignation found vent in an attack on all the missions in the town—C.M.S., W.M.M.S., and American Baptists. On that Sunday morning the chiefs, apparently by agreement, sent round the

official town crier, prohibiting the usual services, and that encouraged the mob to act with violence. The protests of the missionaries proved useless, and it soon became apparent that the attack was not so much upon the Egba Christians as upon the missionaries themselves. Their houses were plundered and their goods carried off or destroyed. Very wisely they offered no resistance, but stood sorrowfully by watching their homes being wrecked. Then they were expelled from the town. When some of the African workers and members attempted to defend the missionaries, the wrath of the angry crowd fell upon them, and some were beaten or threatened for taking the part of the English. Some of the churches also were damaged or destroyed, and a company of elderly women were dragged out of a prayer meeting, stripped, and beaten.

With sorrowful hearts the missionaries turned from the city they had loved and sought refuge in Lagos. It was a disaster, and for a time it seemed as though the work of over twenty years had been hopelessly wrecked.

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But it was not all dark. When the first fierce blasts of the storm had died down, it became clear that the church in Abeokuta had not been uprooted. It was estimated that there were about 1500 Christians in the city, and they banded themselves to carry on their worship as regularly as possible. Being forbidden to use such churches as were not in ruins, they met in one another's houses, and

under the care of three devoted African pastors the number of Christians actually increased. One of those pastors, Mr. Moore, even took the risk of gathering his flock in the ruins of Aké church[1] and encouraged them with an address from the text : " I will now turn aside and see this great sight, *why the bush is not burned.*" Moreover, the Egba Christians got into touch with their brethren at Ibadan, and although these two great cities continued to be enemies, they exchanged gifts in token of goodwill, saying as they did so : " However great misunderstandings may be among the heathen of Abeokuta and Ibadan, let unity and peace be among us Christians of the two rival cities, for we are followers of the Prince of Peace."

Within two years the Abeokuta Christians rebuilt Aké church, and great was the missionaries' joy when they heard that a thousand people were present at the reopening service and had taken up a collection in cowrie shells equal to £73. That same day 316 people received Holy Communion.

Townsend was in England at the time the missionaries were expelled from Abeokuta and he did not return to Lagos till 1870. He received frequent messages from his people, and he wrote them a pastoral letter of advice and exhortation. He learned that the new Alake desired his return, and this encouraged him to attempt (in May, 1871) to

[1] Aké church had been destroyed by accidental fire in 1866. It was rebuilt and reopened only six months before the riot in which it was again destroyed.

visit Abeokuta in the hope of securing the return o the missionaries. But when he reached Isheri, h was stopped by Egba scouts and obliged to retur to Lagos. Not until 1875, eight years after the out break, was he (together with his wife) permitted t return to the scene of his former labours, and the only for a few months They had scarcely been i the town two months when the Dahomian army again drew near, for Gelele was still pledged to his father's spirit to blot out Abeokuta. They built their camp within sight of the town, but before they began the assault, the Egbas, emboldened by their former experiences, sallied out in two bodies and attacked them in open field. Day after day the fighting continued, and Townsend tells how the sound of worship and singing in the church mingled with the noise of muskets. At last, watching one day with a telescope from the top of a high hill, he saw the Dahomians in full retreat. Never again did they assault the walls of Abeokuta.

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In August (1875) the Townsends were back in Lagos, and in the following year ill-health compelled their retirement from the work they loved so dearly. With the exception of these few months they spent in Abeokuta in 1875, no missionary was able to live there until 1880, a period of thirteen years after the expulsion.

LAGOS. THE BOAT LANDING-PLACE ON THE LAGOON

Photograph by the Author

XI

LAGOS BECOMES THE MISSION HEAD-QUARTERS

1851–1880

IN a previous chapter we have seen how, after its capture by the British squadron in 1851, Lagos was occupied by Gollmer and the other C.M.S. workers, and, owing to its advantageous position as the key to the whole country it soon grew to be an important station. When Bishop Vidal visited it in 1854 he was overjoyed at the progress that had been made. At the south end of the town, Gollmer had built Holy Trinity Church, a large and in every way suitable building, though made only of mud and grass thatch. Its whitewashed walls gleamed in the sunshine and made it a clearly recognizable landmark to vessels entering the lagoon. It was opened by the bishop on this visit, and he conducted a confirmation service in it. That afternoon the bishop's heart again thrilled as he stood in the open air and preached to a great crowd of people in front of the chief's "palace." The chief of Lagos, dressed in his finest robes, sat under the veranda, surrounded by his war chiefs and councillors, who squatted under huge umbrellas. To the chief's right and left were his male and female slaves and their children; further to the right were the Christians, and to the left his numerous wives and their little

ones. A large crowd of curious onlookers stood around. Before this assembly Bishop Vidal and Mr. Gollmer, with the interpreter, sat at a table placed on a grass mat, and under the blue African sky the bishop preached to chief, courtiers, and people from the words : " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Another church had been built at the north end of the town on the very spot where the old slave barracoon had been only a few years before, the very barracoon in which Crowther had been chained to his fellow captives ! Schools had been opened, and the foundations of a growing and promising work well and truly laid.

It was, however, becoming evident that Dosumo, the chief (son of Akitoye, whom the British had restored in 1851), was unequal to the task of suppressing the slave trade, and in 1861 he ceded Lagos to Britain. With annexation the real development of Lagos began, and so rapid was its progress that a few years later the island city was referred to as the " Liverpool of West Africa." Whatever may be our opinion of Captain Glover's Yoruba policy, there can be no question as to his energy in developing Lagos. From being a squalid place and a nest of slave dealers, it became a busy centre of lawful commerce, with wharves and warehouses and government buildings, beside the several churches and schools of the C.M.S. and Wesleyan Missionary Society. Along the " Marina," facing the lagoon, Europeans

built their houses and places of business. In ever-increasing numbers, large ships lay at anchor off the bar, not many of them venturing to cross the white line of breakers. Their cargoes from England were brought up the calm lagoon by canoes and unloaded at the wharves. In like manner loads of Yoruba cotton and palm oil were taken out to the ships for export to Europe. So rapidly did the trade increase that in three years (1866 to 1869) the value of exports rose from £262,000 to £670,000.

The merchants and traders of Lagos were by no means all Europeans. Many were Sierra Leonians, numbers of whom were Christians, and this gave strength to the churches, for many of them were men in good positions and well able to contribute generously to church funds.

Then, in 1867, came the outbreak in Abeokuta, and the expulsion of missionaries. These troubles led to Lagos becoming the centre and stronghold of the mission. For some years all the missionaries resided there, and many Egba Christians came from up-country to settle near their fathers in the faith of Christ. Other Christians settled in villages along the lagoon, such as Ebute Meta, and this led to the extension of the work to the regions around Lagos. The training institution and the female institution, formerly at Abeokuta, were re-established in Lagos. New churches were built at suitable points : Christ Church, Faji, for the English-speaking community (both European and Sierra Leonian) ; St. Peter's, Faji, for Yorubas ; Palm Church,

Aroloya ; Trinity Church, Ebute Ero ; and one at Ebute Meta on the mainland. With increased numbers and increased means, the Lagos churches soon began to meet the cost of the mission schools and so relieved C.M.S. funds to that extent. Then, in 1871, the first four Yoruba clergymen received ordination from Bishop Cheetham, and three more were ordained in 1876.[1]

The growth of the work may also be evidenced by the fact that in 1872, the C.M.S. had a Christian community of over 2000 in Lagos, 200 at Badagry and places on the coast and lagoon, and over 2000 at Abeokuta and Ibadan and other places in the interior. In that same year the gifts of the churches of Lagos amounted to £1400 and those of the interior (in spite of their troubles) to £250.

Unfortunately in the Lagos-Yoruba Mission, as in Sierra Leone, not a few missionaries, owing to the unhealthy climate and tropical diseases, laid down their lives, some after a very brief term of service. The Government had to face the same problem, and found it wise to allow its representatives very short terms of service and frequent furloughs. After many painful experiences the C.M.S. resolved to adopt a similar policy, but it is exceedingly difficult to say how far it has been justified by results. It has so often happened that new missionaries have died within a few weeks or months of landing, and not a few of those who have survived have lived for many years. It is very remarkable that three of the

[1] One of these, Charles Phillips, subsequently became a bishop.

pioneers were spared for exceptionally long terms of service: Townsend (forty years), Gollmer (twenty-one years), and Hinderer (twenty-eight years)—all of whom retired from the Mission owing to ill health during the period dealt with in this chapter, Gollmer in 1862, Townsend in 1876, and Hinderer in 1877. Such continuity of experience and policy undoubtedly had a very marked influence on the growth and development of the Mission, and it would have been still greater had it not been for the disturbances in the Yoruba Country.

Not until 1880 was it possible again permanently to station European missionaries in the interior.

XII

"THE BLACK BISHOP"

1864–1879

AFTER consecration as Bishop of the Niger, Crowther returned to his sphere of service. His restless activity fitted him admirably for his task. He has been described as "a little man with nerves of steel, upon whose constitution neither lagoon nor mosquito could leave any deadly germ, whom incessant work did not seem to wear. Intellectually alert, spiritually optimistic and full of faith, he was always on the tiptoe of new achievements, and yet no man had more native dignity or common sense."

Within a few months he was back at Onitsha where he ordained one of the African workers. It was an epoch-making moment, when, in the midst of that heathen town on the banks of the mighty river, an African knelt before an African bishop to receive the laying on of hands. A new thing was taking place in Africa. Yet at that very time human sacrifices were being offered in Onitsha because of the death of a prince; victims were buried alive with the corpse, including an innocent eight-year-old girl who was to be the prince's snuff bearer in the spirit world! A few days later Crowther was up at the confluence baptizing and confirming converts at Gbebè. Then he went to Idda to make another

attempt to gain a foothold in that difficult place. Then down the river again on a special visit in response to a call from the chief of Bonny.

In these days Bonny was a typical delta town, built amid dense forests and mangrove swamps, on the banks of a muddy creek not far from the sea. The low tide revealed vast stretches of black, evil-smelling mud that bred disease, and when the tides were exceptionally high its streets were inundated with muddy water that eddied and swirled among the houses. It was seldom free from mud and slush. The swamps around were the lurking places of alligators and pythons, and it was a veritable inferno of mosquitoes. All this was typical of its moral and religious condition, for the town was a cesspool of darkest paganism. It was literally overrun with sacred iguanas or monster lizards, many of which were six feet in length. They were believed to be the protectors of the town, and lay about at their pleasure. Even if they lashed savagely with their long, serrated tails, wounding the bare legs of passers-by, they were not under any circumstances to be molested. It was death to kill one. The belief was not that the lizards themselves were divine, but that they were indwelt by the spirits of the departed; any harm done to them, or any insult offered to them, was therefore an injury to the spirits of the dead. The dark bush around was the secret abode of "juju" with its evil priests and degrading rites; the people had good cause to shun the "juju" bush.

Being so easily accessible from the sea, Bonny long had an infamous notoriety as a slave market, and for many years had been visited by European oil traders, who lived in their ships or hulks anchored in the river, the town itself having no attraction for them. But beyond the mere matter of trade Bonny remained practically untouched by either civilization or Christianity. Commerce alone cannot civilize. A degraded pagan in his squalid hut by the mangrove swamp may don a European shirt and hat and remain both pagan and savage. Hence the stress laid by Macgregor Laird, and by the men who planned the 1841 Niger Expedition, on the close co-operation of Government, commerce, and missions.

The local chief, a man named Peppel, who boasted the title of "King of Bonny," had in reality but little influence or power over the other chiefs of the town, and, as became such a place, the majority of the people were the slaves of the chiefs. There had long been trouble in Bonny, and the king had been exiled to Ascension Island, and afterwards he contrived to spend several years in England. While here, in the early 'sixties, he received baptism, taking the name of William. He returned to his native land at least a nominal Christian, and soon afterwards, for motives not easy to analyse, he wrote to Dr. Tait, then Bishop of London, asking for a missionary for Bonny. The bishop sent the appeal to Crowther, who was not the man to miss any possible opening for the Gospel.

A less promising place for a mission could scarcely

be imagined, and Crowther walked through Bonny several times before he found a place dry enough for even a temporary school and teacher's house. But a site was found at last and a beginning was made. The king and chiefs signed written agreements and promised £150 a year towards the mission and school. So Crowther stationed there two African teachers to conduct the school and preach in the market place. Ten minutes' walk outside the town, he came upon a sandy patch, four feet above the spring tides, and covered with trees. This he chose as a site for a more permanent mission station to be occupied later.

On a subsequent visit, in 1866, when the school was established and the workers well-known and trusted, the bishop pressed for permission to build a house for the teachers on the site he had chosen outside the town. At once there was trouble. The priests declared that the place was "juju bush," and the fear-stricken people exclaimed that it was "*very bad* juju bush."

"The spirits must not be disturbed," said the priests.

"The Christians will die if they go there," echoed the people.

But Crowther was unperturbed. "Give us the ground," he said, "and leave us to settle the palaver with the spirits."

The king and chiefs consented; but when it came to clearing the bush and felling the trees, the people stood aghast and refused to do the work.

At last the king sent his son George, who had been educated in England, with ten slaves who could be trusted to obey. Even George, with his smattering of Christianity, felt nervous when it came to the point, and asked that some one should read the Scriptures and offer prayer. Then the work began, and as branches were lopped off and trees were felled it turned out to be a place where the bodies of human sacrifices and twin babies were thrown and left to decompose. It was indeed "*very bad* juju bush," strewn with skulls and bones. When the vegetation and all traces of man's wickedness had been destroyed, a mud and thatch school chapel was built on the site of that once repulsive fetish grove. Then a curious discovery was made. In the town a large copper bell, more than a yard in diameter, was brought to light. For long years it had lain unused, unless, indeed, it had been worshipped as juju. When cleaned up, it was found to bear an inscription to the effect that it had been cast at Downham, Norfolk, in 1824, "for Opooboo Foobra, King of Grand Bonny." It was now, at the personal expense of one of the chiefs, transferred from its resting place and used as the bell for God's house.

In their jealousy the juju priests did all they could to hinder the spread of the Gospel, and even worked upon the fears of one chief to such an extent that he bore the cost of rebuilding a celebrated fetish house that had fallen on evil days, a shrine that was decorated with the skulls of human sacrifices. This effort to infuse new life into the old

heathenism was parried by an effort on the part of the Christians to overthrow the cult of the sacred lizards. On Easter Sunday, 1867, it was publicly proclaimed that the lizard worship was henceforth renounced by George Peppel, who had become chief of Bonny in place of his father now dead. The order went forth, that the reptiles were no longer "juju" and were to be killed or driven away. To many of the superstitious townspeople this must have seemed perilous in the extreme, and probably hundreds would have dived into the sea and taken their chances with the sharks rather than run the awful risk of lifting a hand against one of the sacred iguanas.

But the Christians had no such fear, and carried out the chief's command, chasing the long-pampered creatures and killing them. Seeing that no judgment fell upon the transgressors, and that the spirits did not retaliate, others joined in the pursuit, until the whole town became the scene of a grand lizard hunt. Crowther declared that it seemed as though the people were moved to revenge at the thought of the long thraldom under which they had been held. In one market place no less than fifty-seven dead lizards were counted. This drastic reformation was effected within three years of Bishop Crowther's first visit to Bonny, and it serves to show the power of an African chief when influenced in the right direction. It is doubtful if such a change could have been brought about in so short a time had it not been decreed by the chief and his council.

That distinguished African administrator and traveller, Sir Harry Johnston, in lecturing to the Royal Geographical Society in London said, in reference to the lizard worship of Bonny :—

> For its effectual abolishment, which has been of the greatest benefit to the well-being of Europeans and natives alike, we owe our thanks, not to the intervention of naval or consular officers, nor to the bluff remonstrances of traders, but to the quiet, unceasing labours of the agents of the Church Missionary Society.

That same year, 1867, found Crowther taking up a new enterprise. At the mouth of another inlet of the Niger delta, between Bonny and the Nun, was the port of Brass, called Brass-Tuwon to distinguish it from the more important town of Brass-Nembe some miles higher up the river. Brass and Bonny had much in common, an evil past, a pestilential situation, and a degrading paganism. In Brass, instead of iguanas, the boa constrictor was the chief object of devotion, under the belief that the repulsive reptiles were possessed by spirits. So sacred were these snakes held to be, and so deeply rooted was the worship, that it was actually recognized in a treaty made in 1856 between the chief of Brass and the British consul, one clause of which laid it down that a fine of a puncheon of oil was to be levied upon any English subject who killed one of the snakes! Slavery, gin, and other baser elements of "civilization" had also done their deadly work in Brass, and the people were demoralized.

Yet here also Crowther gained a foothold. The

chief, Ockiya by name, welcomed him, gave permission for the opening of a mission, and even agreed to pay half the cost of maintaining a teacher and a school. Though less romantic than that at Bonny, the work in Brass was steady and effective. Among the people who received baptism was one of the prominent chiefs, and his son became a mission teacher. Then another chief, who had been a bitter enemy of the Gospel, fell under its influence. But it was ten years before Ockiya himself surrendered his jujus.

The Niger Mission had its tragedies as well as its victories, and often its brave bishop had to drink the cup of sorrow as well as sing the psalm of praise. Bad news came down the river : the town of Gbebe, at the confluence, had been blotted out in a fierce tribal conflict, and the promising mission station, with its cotton gins, school, and church, was utterly destroyed, for the town had been burned down by the victors. Thanks largely to the timely help of the consul at Lokoja (Mr. Fell),[1] on the opposite side of the Niger, the teachers and Christians escaped with their lives but with the loss of all else. Some of them found refuge in the bush, but others were saved by canoes that the consul sent across the river to their assistance. As soon as he received the news of the destruction of Gbebe, Crowther went with all speed up the river, visited

[1] The new trading and consular post that Dr. Baikie had established opposite the confluence, on the land purchased in 1841 for the model farm, the one tangible result of that ill-starred expedition.

the ruins of the devastated town, and rebuked the chiefs who had been guilty of destruction and plunder. This disaster led him to transfer the work of the mission to Lokoja, which from that time took the place of Gbebe.

That eventful year (1867) was to be marked by yet another tragedy. In September, while travelling up the river by canoe, accompanied by his son Dandeson and a band of canoe men, the bishop was suddenly seized by the Abokko of Oko-Okien (one of the chiefs of the Atta of Idda), deprived of everything save his clothes, and held a prisoner for ten days. The man had formerly appeared to be rather friendly and Crowther was at first puzzled by this unexpected change of attitude. Ultimately it turned out to be greed and jealousy. The fellow had noticed that for twenty-five years Crowther had been on board almost every ship that came to Idda, whether man-of-war or merchantman, and was therefore the oldest visitor known on the river. He had concluded from this that the bishop *owned* all the ships and was a man of great substance. He felt that this great man, owner of so many vessels and director of so much trade, had not given him suitable "dashes" or dues, and he was now resolved to compel payment! In vain the bishop strove to explain; the wily chief would not be put off, and demanded £1000 ransom for Crowther and a second £1000 for his son.

Meanwhile, they were treated with great harshness and indignity, being made to sleep on the damp

ground in an open shed with the canoe boys ; they were denied access to their clothing and other luggage and provisions. The bishop at last contrived to get a message to Lokoja, and the consul came to his assistance. But the Abokko was insolent and refused to release the bishop until the ransom was paid. The consul absolutely refused to pay, knowing full well that it would encourage other chiefs to play the same game. Finding matters at a deadlock, Fell called to Crowther and the others to make a dash for liberty, and the whole party ran to the boat followed by musket shots and a flight of barbed arrows. As the boat was pushing off a poisoned arrow struck the consul ; and in spite of all Crowther could do Fell sank rapidly and died before the boat reached Lokoja. Very touching was the bishop's grief over the man whom he had learned to honour and love. It afterwards transpired that the Atta of Idda had shared in the plunder.

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As the years went by the bishop's time was fully occupied with ceaseless journeyings through his great diocese. In his diaries and letters we get glimpses of him travelling by canoe, by trading ship, or by gunboat, whichever chanced to serve his purpose at the moment, confirming converts in one place, ordaining African clergy in another, exhorting the flock here, and trying to smooth over some difficulty with a troublesome chief there. Almost daily he was confronted with the most baffling

problems, some arising from the gross heathenism on every hand, and others due to some moral failure within the infant churches. Often we find him remonstrating with some chief and his councillors over some instance of human sacrifice that had just come to light, or reasoning with them concerning the folly and wickedness of infanticide.

The treatment of twins caused Crowther constant anxiety. To the pagan mind, the birth of twins has always appeared something unnatural and terrible, the work of an evil spirit; and the fear of some impending calamity has overcome the natural love that normal African parents have for their offspring. In Bonny, and among the Ibo people it was the custom to kill both the children; but in and around Brass it was usual to put only the second child to death. In other tribes the unhappy mother was killed or driven into the forest and the twins were thrown away to perish. At each mission station efforts were made to dispel the dark superstitions that lay behind these practices. The bishop and his helpers reasoned with chiefs and peoples, but fear is not easily expelled from the African heart. Too often they were met with the answer: "It is the custom of our tribe." Naturally the change began first among the Christians, in whose hearts the light of the knowledge of God was slowly breaking. As their trust in an almighty Father increased, their dread of spirits diminished; they abandoned the cruel custom for themselves, and began to help the mission staff in their efforts to overthrow it in the

town or the village where they lived. Crowther himself, when occasion required it, spoke sternly to king and chief, and knowing the African mind as he did, he dealt with the subject so convincingly that he sometimes achieved his object.

At times some shrewd chief found a strange way of surmounting the difficulty. At Bonny, for instance, the king in full council decreed that in future twins were not to be slain but taken to the mission station and given to the missionaries ! One wonders whether the proposal was not prompted by the keen African sense of humour, or a desire to pacify the troublesome remonstrant, rather than by any conviction as to the wickedness of the old practice. But the results were satisfactory ; people began to bring their new-born twins to the mission house, and the Christians were vigilant in looking out and reporting such births. In this way not a few baby lives were saved. The evil practice died slowly, but it died. And the day came when the priest of Bonny, who had been the most bitter opponent of the change, was himself overcome by the Christ he had hated ; he received Christian baptism and became a communicant.

Another very serious social evil, that constantly brought sorrow to the bishop and his helpers, was the practice of human sacrifice. All the tribes of the delta and up the river were more or less addicted to it.

Not infrequently the bishop was anxious about one or other of his stations, fearing that in some

tribal war it should be destroyed. Once he learned that Lokoja itself was in danger, for Dasaba, the Fula king of Bida, was in a nasty mood. Crowther at once went up river to Bida, saw the king, and succeeded in getting promise of security. Next we see him opening a new church and preaching before the king at Onitsha, where a daughter of the king and several other palace women had been baptized. Yet a few days afterwards, in that very town, a young girl was put to death as a sacrifice for the people. She was dragged by the feet for a couple of miles along the rough ground, until, bruised and bleeding, her life ebbed out. On another occasion an outbreak of smallpox at Onitsha was attributed to the construction of a well in the mission compound, and the priests wanted to throw a man down the well to appease the anger of the spirits. Joy and sorrow, sunshine and storm, blended strangely in those days. One outstanding joy came in 1870 when Crowther ordained to the ministry his own son Dandeson,[1] an event of unique interest, it being the first time an African bishop had ordained his African son. Another source of joy was the readiness of converts to spread the news of the Gospel. This was especially so at Bonny, where many of the Christians, being keen traders, constantly travelled about the rivers and creeks of the delta and sometimes settled in heathen villages or towns. In this way it was nothing

[1] The ordination took place at Islington, London, during one of Crowther's visits to England. That son is now Archdeacon Crowther.

unusual for them to introduce Christianity into new places and to found new churches.

Often it was necessary for the bishop to succour and advise converts and even teachers who were being persecuted. Usually these were isolated cases, but at times a more general persecution broke out in some town or village. Such an instance occurred at Bonny after the work had been established there for nearly a dozen years. On Christmas Day, 1873, the baptism of nine converts stirred the juju priests to anger, and they succeeded in rousing the chiefs to believe that their slaves, when they became Christians, would no longer obey them. It largely resolved itself into a matter of Sunday work and worship, and some leading chiefs forbade their slaves to attend church or school. But the poor creatures, so little removed from gross heathenism, could not give up the strength and comfort of Christian worship, and they met under cover of night in secret places in the forest. As soon as possible Crowther went to Bonny and reasoned with the chiefs on the value of a day of rest and on God's claims. He admitted that the *bodies* of the slaves belonged to the chiefs, but maintained that *both body and soul* belonged to God. He wrote :—

> To convince them of the truthfulness of this, I put the question to them individually, whether, when God sent His messenger Death to take away the soul of any of their slaves, could the owner prevent that soul from obeying the summons ? They unanimously replied " No."

But the chiefs would not yield, and the slaves had no redress.

A baptismal service held the following year proved the signal for another and more violent outburst of persecution. This time the crucial point was that of eating meat that had been presented to idols, a subject that reminds us of apostolic times. One of the converts was a slave of a chief who paraded the adopted name of "Captain Hart." As the slave took the baptismal name of Joshua, he became known as Joshua Hart. Nothing would induce him to eat things offered to idols, and he regularly attended church. No other charges seem to have been made against him. Punishment did not deter him, and his brutal master resorted to sterner measures. Time after time he was flung high in the air and allowed to fall heavily on the ground. Arguments and threats were only met by the brave, calm answer: "If my master requires me to do work for him, however hard, I will try my best to do it. . . . But if he requires me to partake of things sacrificed to the gods, I will never do it." In wrath, the master had his slave bound hand and foot, and taken out in a canoe to be drowned. During those awful moments, while his very life hung in the balance, Joshua prayed aloud that the Lord Jesus would forgive his persecutors. This still more inflamed the anger of Captain Hart. "You be praying again!" he yelled, and the next moment flung poor Joshua into the water. Bound as he was, he did not sink, and his master had him pulled into the canoe again and gave him a last chance. But that simple illiterate African would not deny Christ. He was

again thrown into the water, and as he rose to the surface he was beaten on the head with a paddle and prodded with a sharp-pointed pole until he was dead.

Encouraged by the heroism of Joshua, other Christians stood firmly for their faith. One poor canoe man was deliberately starved to death because he absolutely refused to eat the forbidden meat. "Master, I am on God's side," he said; "therefore I cannot eat things offered to idols." He was kept without food or water, until after six days death released him from his sufferings. Others were equally brave. The persecutors, fearing to carry out their torture of Christians too publicly, and thus be discovered by English traders, carried their victims to the bush where their sufferings could not be seen or their cries heard. Some were stripped naked and left bound on the ground to the mercy of sand flies, driver ants, and other pests that have the power of making life unendurable. Two free men were kept in the bush, in chains, for a year, and were offered chiefships if they would return to the old faith. "Jesus has put a padlock on my heart, and has taken the key to heaven," said one of them to a juju priest who was bullying them. Yet in the midst of that persecution we find the Bonny Christians praying in a church prayer meeting in these words :—

> We beseech Thee, O Lord, not to rain down fire and brimstone upon these stiff-necked people . . . We pray Thee to rain down Thy love upon them as in the case of Saul, so that our persecutors may be arrested on their way.

It was by the blood of such men that the early Church was built up ; and with such noble examples before us, who shall say that the children of Africa are incapable of living for ideals ?

As usual, the persecution utterly failed to achieve its end. The Church was not overthrown. Within three years Captain Hart himself was so subdued that after an interview with Dandeson Crowther he persuaded his fellow-chiefs to grant liberty of conscience, and a few months later he received baptism. Two canoe loads of his idols were thrown into the estuary. Again the church became full of worshippers, the Sunday congregations numbering a thousand. No longer compelled to meet stealthily in the bush, Christian people now began to hold regular family prayers in their compounds.

Trading steamers in increasing numbers were plying the waterways of the delta, and sometimes proceeding up the main stream of the Niger. This often caused new complication for the Mission. Not infrequently white traders brought discredit upon the white man's religion, and the gin they sold inevitably tended to demoralize those whom the bishop and his people were trying to help. It sometimes happened too, that Sierra Leonian traders settled at places up the river, and although some were a very great help to the churches, others, intent on material gain, proved unable to resist the temptations that surrounded them and fell into gross sin. Too often God's Name was " profaned among the heathen." The Negro peoples, naturally imitative,

noted the lives and habits of these "civilized" strangers in their midst, both white and black, and copied their vices more easily than their virtues. Often converts but a few years, or even months, removed from gross heathenism fell back into sin and needed admonition or discipline. The teachers and catechists were men of very limited education and Christian experience, and though earnest and devoted, were not strong enough to deal with difficult situations and the pastoral problems that constantly arose. It became evident that a mission steamer was needed to enable the now ageing bishop to travel quickly from place to place. He needed "to be everywhere at once," yet he was entirely dependent upon canoes and chance ships, with the result that it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to exercise the oversight that was necessary. Friends in England therefore responded to his appeal and provided a paddle steamer, which was most appropriately named the *Henry Venn*.

Great was Crowther's joy when the new vessel reached him, and she proved of inestimable service. In addition to the essential work between stations, she achieved some important exploring results. For example, in 1879, the year after her arrival in Africa, she made a memorable voyage up the Benué and reached a place 140 miles beyond that reached by Dr. Baikie in 1854.

But again trouble was mixed with joy, for while the *Henry Venn* was up the Benué trouble developed in the neighbourhood of Onitsha. Ignorance and

superstition had led some tribesmen to fire upon passing steamers, and there were other attacks on British subjects. Riots and outrages occurred, and the mission premises were plundered by a mob even while a gunboat with the consul on board was anchored off the town to inquire into the troubles. The chiefs were reluctant to negotiate, and during the night H.M.S. *Pioneer* was fired upon and her captain wounded. Next morning, after giving time for the populace to leave the town, the gunboat opened fire upon Onitsha and destroyed a large portion of it. The mission church was partly wrecked in the burning of the town. On the previous Sunday 260 people had been present at the service ; now the place was blotted out.

After the bombardment it seemed wise to transfer the mission to Asaba on the opposite side of the river and make a new beginning there. But not a few of the Onitsha Christians stood firm, and even amid the wreck of their sanctuary they carried on their worship, a schoolboy reading the service and expounding the Scriptures as best he could.

Thus had Crowther to contend with sorrow upon sorrow, trial upon trial. And beside all these things that were without, there was that which came to him daily, the care of all the churches.

XIII

THE NIGER MISSION REINFORCED BY WHITE MISSIONARIES

1880–1892

THE Niger Mission had now entered upon a very difficult period that was to continue for more than a decade. It is so with most missions in all parts of the world ; after the early triumphs there comes a period of reaction. In the early stages many of the converts are men and women whose strength of character enables them to stand for Christ almost alone and amid persecution. They are succeeded by larger numbers, too many of whom lack the devotion of the earlier converts. As time passes, some find the restraints of Christian moral law irksome, and the pull of the old life is something that cannot be understood by those who dwell in a Christian land. A slackness creeps in ; the old heathen marriage customs are tolerated ; sons or daughters are married to non-Christians ; such functions as pagan funerals and dances are participated in, and drinking or immorality is indulged in secretly. Sometimes the expulsion of an unworthy member causes dissatisfaction in the church, and even the teachers or clergy may become involved in the quarrel.

It is not for us, who have behind us many centuries of Christian teaching and influence, and are

protected by Christian public opinion, to judge hastily those who have neither our enlightenment nor our privileges, and are only a few years removed from raw paganism. In many cases their knowledge of Christian truth is very slight, and our code of morals puzzles them. It is easy for them to memorize the Ten Commandments, but it is much more difficult to learn to regulate their lives by them.

In ancient Greece and Rome religion and ethics were two distinct and separate things ; the priests attended to the one and the philosophers to the other. There was no necessary connexion between them. What did it matter to the gods how a man lived ? Enough for them that he offered sacrifice ; his private life was no business of theirs. The popular conception might have been expressed in the words : " Religion is religion, and morals are morals," just as some Englishmen say : " Religion is religion, and business is business," two separate things. The beliefs of pagan Africa are very similar ; religion is a matter of offering sacrifices, performing ceremonies, and observing taboos ; what we call moral conduct has little or nothing to do with it. Stealing, adultery, and other wrongdoing are not regarded as *sins* against the gods or spirits, but merely as social offences against one's neighbours. A man's standing with his god is not thought to be impaired by the fact that he practises immorality or dishonesty, though such things may involve him in trouble with his fellow men.

Brought up with such ideas, it is easy to see how

very difficult it is for the convert from paganism to grasp the new (and to him startling) conception of a God Who demands purity of heart and life. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," is to the African an absolutely revolutionary proposition, and usually it takes time and careful training to enable him to adjust himself to the demands of his new and exacting religion.

Training, not merely telling, but *training* in the new life, is what is required. To teach these converts to repeat the Commandments is not nearly enough. Just as our own children, in spite of repeated telling, sometimes err, and have to be corrected and patiently trained in what is right, so those who turn to God from raw heathenism need to be patiently and lovingly trained in this holy way. To them the ancient prayer: "*Teach me* to do Thy will for Thou art my God" should have a new and deep significance.

Unfortunately, in too many instances, this all-important task of training the converts has to be left in the hands of the workers least fitted to give it, the catechists and teachers; and this is one of the greatest weaknesses in a mission. We may be thankful that many of these subordinate workers are men of experience and established Christian character. But others, though earnest, are painfully ill-equipped for their task; and in the emergency of a rapidly-growing movement it often happens that untrained men are used. Sometimes such men, under careful supervision, make good and do fine

work ; but some fail disastrously, and occasionally fall into open sin and have to be dismissed. Again, let us not judge them too harshly. Let us remember their meagre equipment, intellectual, religious, and moral, and their limited experience. Often they are faced with temptations before which many a young Englishman has fallen.

Such dangers and difficulties of pioneer missionary effort can only be guarded against by (1) constant supervision, (2) by seeing that the catechists are well trained, and (3) that they are married to girls who also have been trained for Christian service. It is necessary to keep all these considerations in mind while we survey the Niger Mission during the 'eighties.

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The shadows of evening were beginning to gather around the grand old bishop. He was then considerably over seventy years of age,[1] and the death of his wife brought deep personal sorrow into his life. He was growing a little weary with the heavy burdens he was carrying. Yet his responsibilities continued to increase. The African clergy, catechists, and teachers of his immense diocese were stationed so far apart that it was difficult to exercise sufficient oversight. To aid him in this work, two African archdeacons had been appointed to share with him the burdens of office ; one was his own son, the Rev. Dandeson C. Crowther, and the other

[1] Assuming him to have been born about 1806, but the exact year of his birth is not known.

the Rev. Henry Johnson, who had had charge of a church in Lagos. The former was appointed to the charge of the delta region, and the latter of the Niger from Onitsha to Lokoja and beyond. The aged bishop received still further help from Mr. J. H. Ashcroft, the English lay missionary in charge of the *Henry Venn*, who assisted in the business affairs of the Mission.

For the moment the outlook seemed brighter. But new troubles constantly occurred at the stations or outposts. In the delta, things were going fairly well and progress was made, but up the river difficulties arose with some of the catechists. Traders and other Europeans brought stories of incapacity and even of moral failure. Probably some of these tales were untrue and others greatly exaggerated by white men who were unsympathetic or even hostile to the Mission, but there was enough in them to cause Bishop Crowther and the C.M.S. Committee gravest anxiety.

There can be no doubt that at some places the workers, left for long periods without oversight or encouragement, had grown slack. Either through inefficiency or laziness, or through ordinary human frailties arising from isolation and loneliness, they were not instructing their people as they should have done in the moral duties of the Christian life ; and in their eagerness to report progress they were bringing forward for baptism or confirmation, men and women who were not ready for so important a step. Lax discipline led inevitably, in some

places, to churches being more or less filled with people whose manner of life proved them to be ignorant of the first principles of the Gospel. Some of the catechists themselves were overcome by the temptations around them.

Under the conditions obtaining – the stations scattered over so large an area, the uncertainty of travel, and the general difficulties of oversight – it was not easy to discover slackness and failure at any given place until things had reached a very serious pitch and could no longer be concealed. Every missionary and African clergyman knows how exceedingly difficult it is to be sure of what is actually going on at his outposts, unless he is able constantly to visit them and maintain close personal touch with workers and people. When an outpost is so far away that it can only be visited once or twice a year, and then only for a few hours, it is impossible to look below the surface. A visit from the bishop or archdeacon naturally draws a large congregation ; the church is full, the responses satisfactory, the singing good, and the attention all that can be desired : everything appears to be going well. A week's residence in the place, or even a monthly visit, might reveal a very different state of affairs.

Such were the conditions on the Niger during the unhappy period we are dealing with. With fine spirit the heroic old bishop strove to restore discipline in his huge diocese, and he was well supported by his archdeacons and clergy. But it soon became evident that a crisis had arisen and that

they could not deal effectively with so extensive a work. It was necessary either to limit the sphere of operations or to strengthen the staff. The latter course was decided upon, and after long and very thorough investigation the Committee, with the concurrence of Bishop Crowther, resolved to reinforce the Niger Mission with a few European missionaries.

The first European to be appointed was Thomas Phillips, an Irish business man, who took a theological course at Islington and was ordained priest by Bishop Crowther, who was in England at the time. It was the first instance of a European receiving ordination at the hands of an African. He then went out to the Niger in the capacity of secretary to the Mission, to help the bishop as adviser and friend. His term of service was very short, and he was succeeded by the Rev. James Hamilton. A medical mission was planned for Lokoja, but Dr. Percy Brown, who was sent out to take charge, died before the work was established. Three lay missionaries, sent out to run the *Henry Venn*, did useful service. A more notable recruit was the Rev. John Alfred Robinson, a Cambridge man.

By this time very important political changes were taking place throughout West Africa, changes that are usually known as " the scramble for power." After long periods of " influence " at certain trade centres on the coastline, Germany, France, and Great Britain began to mark off for themselves vast hinterland protectorates. Rights of exploration,

rights of trade, and priority of interests, became subjects of heated controversy. The whole of West Africa was in the melting pot, and it is a matter for thankfulness that the sharp contentions did not lead to a European war. Happily a series of "agreements," "conventions," and "understandings" settled the rival claims; "boundary lines," often more or less arbitrary, were drawn across large-scale maps, and vast areas of Africa were painted red, green, or yellow to indicate protectorates of one or other of the contending Powers.

So mighty a waterway as the Niger was coveted by all the Powers. It had attracted traders of different nations, and in 1880 a French commercial company had no fewer than thirty stations on the Lower Niger. But in 1884 they were bought out by the British "United Africa Company" founded a few years before by George Goldie-Taubman[1] who was destined to prove himself the strong man and empire builder of the Niger. In 1885 a British Protectorate was proclaimed over the coastal regions of the delta, then known as the Oil Rivers. A year later the Company received a royal charter, under which it became the "Royal Niger Company," with exclusive trade rights and territories along the river. From the beginning, the Company set itself to develop the country commercially, to suppress slave raiding, and to prevent tribal wars. Looking back over the fourteen years of the Niger Company's rule, we cannot but recognize that it laid the

[1] Afterwards famous as Sir George Goldie.

foundations of peace and sound government. It was a factor that made for the redemption of that great land we now call Nigeria.

These changes inevitably affected the work of the Niger Mission. With the extension of the Company's operations and the stationing of white men at the trading posts, it became more necessary than ever that there should be Europeans on the mission staff. The direction remained in the hands of Bishop Crowther, and the bulk of the work continued to be done by Africans. But with the growth of commerce and the increase of the drink traffic, new problems claimed attention, and it was seen that they could best be met by the co-operation of African and European workers. The aged bishop heartily held out the hand of fellowship to any white missionaries who were prepared to enter upon the work in a loving, large-hearted spirit.

A new interest now entered the field, and men's eyes began to turn to a new horizon, the great Sudan. During his voyages up the Benué and the Upper Niger, Bishop Crowther's thoughts had more than once turned to the great Moslem states lying to the north of the rivers, the Negro-Moslem emirates of the Hausa and Fulani peoples. In those days that great region was usually known as the Central Sudan or Hausaland. During the 'eighties, the burden of its teeming millions was laid upon the heart of Graham Wilmot Brooke, a young man who had been educated for the army. Though still in

his early 'twenties, Brooke made the Central Sudan his goal and its evangelization his life work. First he attempted to reach it from Algeria by crossing the Sahara Desert. Then he tried to get up the Senegal River; then up the Congo; and finally up the Niger. Lokoja seemed to be the door of the Central Sudan, and he formed the plan of establishing a mission base there, and, having mastered the Hausa and Arabic languages and in other ways prepared himself for so hazardous a task, pushing forward to his great objective. It was a bold plan, boldly conceived ; but Brooke was a young man of heroic mould, with a lion heart and a great faith in God. Convinced that he was called to this enterprise, he allowed nothing to stand in his way. But he was wise as well as brave, practical as well as devout ; and perceiving that his purpose was more likely to be fulfilled under the ægis of a great missionary society than as a private venture, he offered himself and his project to the C.M.S. After full consideration of what so great a venture might involve, the Committee accepted him, and from that time he became as a flame of fire, pleading for Hausaland by pen and voice, and rousing great enthusiasm.

Soon the Rev. John Alfred Robinson, then secretary of the Niger Mission, stationed at Onitsha, cast in his lot with Brooke. The spirit of the two men was shown in the way they contended, not who should be the greatest, but who should be least. Brooke held that Robinson, as the senior and

a clergyman, should be chief. Robinson, with the same humility, protested that Brooke had conceived the enterprise and should be the leader of it. On a visit to Cambridge, Brooke's impassioned appeals secured two more fine recruits, and both of them were gladly accepted by the C.M.S.—Dr. C. F. Harford-Battersby and Eric Lewis, both laymen, though Lewis was afterwards ordained.

Simultaneously, other men were volunteering to reinforce Bishop Crowther's Niger Mission. Prominent among them came two from West Hartlepool, the vicar of St. James's and his curate, the Rev. F. N. Eden and the Rev. H. H. Dobinson. Both were accepted. What was described as a fit of "African fever" seemed to be passing over C.M.S. circles, and it reached its height in a memorable valedictory meeting held on January 20, 1890, in the old Exeter Hall, just half a century after that other memorable gathering in that same hall.[1] In a hall crowded to overflowing, the newly-appointed missionaries spoke in turn, and the chief speaker was the now venerable Bishop Crowther. It was his last visit to England. In a few weeks the men were all on the field. The Sudan party (including Mrs. Brooke and Miss Lewis) were stationed at Lokoja, Eden and Dobinson at Onitsha, and Bennett at Abutshi. A new era seemed to have opened for the Niger Mission.

At Lokoja, the Sudan party set to work to prepare themselves for the great venture, well aware of the

[1] See p. 14.

perils before them. They adopted Hausa clothing, and lived in the simplest way possible ; they accustomed themselves to sitting on the floor for meals, discarded stockings and wore the typical slipper-sandals ; indoors they went bare-footed. They strove to get near to the Moslems and enter into their lives that they might win them for Christ. In utter devotion to their purpose, they actually arranged with the Royal Niger Company that, in case of any disturbance, they were to have no protection from the authorities. Their reason for this step was that they desired no personal security from perils to which their converts might be exposed. " If they imprison us, the British Government is not to interfere ; if they kill us, no reparation must be demanded," wrote Brooke. In 1891 the Sudan party was reinforced by the arrival of two more men, and a couple of trained nurses.

At Onitsha, being in a purely pagan area, Eden and Dobinson had to face totally different problems. Disaster had again overtaken the Onitsha church. Three months before they arrived, a tribal war had placed the Christians in a dilemma. The chiefs had given them the alternative of joining in heathen rites or being driven into exile across the river. In their weakness, most of them yielded, and the church was overwhelmed. Only three or four years before it had been apparently a strong and established church with " enormous congregations, immense classes, and much organization." Now everything was at its lowest ebb and a too drastic policy of pruning

and purification, which led to the dismissal of some of the African clergy and other workers, by causing anger and resentment, had complicated the situation both at Onitsha and down the river. With patience and tact Dobinson set to work to build up again. School work was reorganized. Women missionaries arrived and undertook work for women and girls ; and a printing press was set up.

At the delta stations the situation was brighter, especially at Bonny, where Archdeacon Crowther had been in charge for some years. After a visit in 1891, Dobinson expressed himself well pleased with the work there. He wrote : " Bonny is a fine mission station. The church is large, and holds 1200 or 1300 when quite full. . . . They have large congregations . . . and respond, when the Psalms are read, as you seldom hear them responded to in England. All who can read, do read, and in a good loud voice. None of your cultivated whispers in these parts. The effect is stirring."

But the new promise of progress was speedily overshadowed by sorrow and disappointment. The workers at Lokoja went down time after time with fever. Robinson died, and a few months later Graham Wilmot Brooke was laid to rest by his side. Others had to go home. Lokoja was proving a most unhealthy place. Writing in March, 1892, just after the death of Brooke, Dobinson said : " There have been in all ten European missionaries at Lokoja, and now not one remains." It was but the

beginning of many losses. The Niger was to take heavy toll of European life.

. . . . . .

In the midst of these trials, there came another bereavement. On the last day of 1891, the grand old bishop passed into the presence of his Lord. He died in Lagos, and on the following day, honoured and loved on every hand, he was laid to rest. He was probably about eighty-five years of age, perhaps older, but he continued active almost to the last, though for some time his health had been failing.

For half a century Samuel Adjai Crowther was the outstanding figure of the Nigeria Mission ; and to a remarkable degree the story up to this point is the story of his life. In the annals of the evangelization of West Africa, no name stands higher than his, and no life has been more romantic.

A boy picked out of heathenism and slavery, with no background and no inheritance save generations of crudest paganism, yet he became a man whose Christian character was an example to every one, a scholar capable of translation work of high merit, the founder of a great pioneer mission, and the organizer of a large African Church. As a bishop, his charges are extraordinarily up-to-date even now, and his views therein expressed on subjects as to the place of industrial missions and the problem of polygamy have not yet been advanced upon. Through him new crops, that are now staple foods of the country, were introduced, many new

fruits brought in, even the trade in palm oil initiated. The chiefs looked upon him as their father and adviser, and his influence was far greater than that of any missionary ever sent to work in Nigeria.

His zeal was truly apostolic, and his Christian character and devotion will long be a cherished memory of the churches he founded and the missionary society he served. Few men have had a more difficult task, few have been called to face so many reverses and disappointments ; few have shown a more indomitable spirit, or greater patience and meekness in time of adversity ; and in that he rose from paganism and slavery to a Christian bishopric he was unique. Men failed him, subordinates betrayed his confidence, onlookers criticized him ; he forgave. " He lived in an atmosphere of suspicion and scandal," wrote Dr. Eugene Stock, " yet no tongue, however malicious, of white man or black man, ventured to whisper reproach against his personal reputation." Sorely discouraged, he never yielded to the discouragement ; and he persevered to the end. Only in death did he lay down the burden of the work he loved.

XIV

REORGANIZATION AND PROGRESS

1892 – 1900

THE death of Bishop Crowther marks the close of an epoch in the C.M.S. Mission in Nigeria. We have referred to the saintly character and apostolic zeal of the great and good bishop; but the very kindliness of his nature led to some slackness in his administration of discipline. After his death the question arose as to whether the best interests of the work would not be served by the appointment of a European bishop to succeed him. The matter called for most careful inquiry. Moreover, at that time the Mission was worked in two separate sections, *viz.*, the Niger, Crowther's diocese, and the Yoruba-Lagos section that had all along been under the Bishop of Sierra Leone. The time seemed to have come to unite the two in one new diocese,[1] to be called (at the suggestion of Archbishop Benson) Western Equatorial Africa. The selection of a bishop with the personal and spiritual qualifications for this great diocese gave the C.M.S. Committee no little anxiety before the finger of God seemed to point to the right man, Joseph Sidney Hill.

[1] The fact that Freetown is 1500 miles from Lagos had made it impossible for the Bishops of Sierra Leone to exercise full control of the Yoruba-Lagos Mission. The best they could do was a very occasional visit—sometimes at intervals of several years. They were virtually absentee bishops.

As a young man, Hill had done a short term in Lagos, but had been invalided home. In 1891 he offered to go to Nigeria again, remarking that his health was now sound and he was "as hard as nails." Circumstances pointed to him as the most suitable man for the bishopric. He was a born leader, vigorous, tactful, and resourceful, just the man to lead the African churches to new victories for Christ. At the Archbishop's suggestion, he was sent out first for a six months' tour that he might make a firsthand study of the problems before him. This plan was carried out successfully. His genial disposition and practical common sense won esteem and affection on all hands. Realizing the importance of associating Africans with himself in the leadership of the Mission, Hill laid his plans on wise, broad lines, choosing two experienced African clergymen, Isaac Oluwole and Charles Phillips, to be assistant bishops of his huge diocese. When he returned to England he brought them with him and presented them to the Archbishop for consecration. All three were consecrated together in St. Paul's Cathedral on June 29, 1893. The experiment of the co-operation of English and African bishops has proved a great success, and the solution proposed by Bishop Hill has continued until the present time.

In November, amid great expectations and prayers, Bishop Hill sailed for Africa, accompanied by Mrs. Hill and a dozen new missionaries, five men and seven women. They reached Lagos in

mid-December. Three weeks later there came the startling cable: "Bishop Hill and Mrs. Hill at rest." They had died in Lagos on January 5 (1894) within a few hours of one another. Then, before the Society at home had recovered from this terrible blow, and was still without details of the bishop's death, other cables came with tragic swiftness announcing the death of one after another of the missionaries: on January 17 the Rev. E. W. Mathias, on the 20th the Rev. J. Vernall, on the 21st the Rev. A. E. Sealey, and on the 23rd Miss Mansbridge. It was overwhelming.

In sorrow and bewilderment the Committee waited for letters with full details of the disaster that had shattered hopes and plans, waited too, with almost speechless anxiety for more cables, which happily did *not* come. The angel of death had passed on. The whole Mission, indeed the Society itself, was stricken. For seventy years the C.M.S. had known nothing like it. In due course the mails brought the sad story. Bishop Hill had died in the afternoon, and his wife, herself too ill to be told of her loss, just after midnight; and then, as one after another was stricken down by the unseen enemy, their colleagues nursed and watched over them with loving care, not knowing who might be the next victim. Those were terrible hours, days, weeks for the little band of missionaries in Nigeria. At the time men talked about malaria, and dysentery, and blackwater; it was years before scientific investigations discovered that the real enemy was

yellow fever, a pestilence the very existence of which had never been suspected in Lagos.

. . . . . .

The unexpected death of Bishop Hill created a very difficult situation. For two years the Niger had been without episcopal oversight. The death of so many missionaries and the retirement of others had disorganized everything, and it was felt that a new bishop must be appointed immediately. In the emergency, the Committee nominated the Rev. Herbert Tugwell, who, four years before, had gone out from Cambridge to Lagos and thus added to his other high qualifications a thorough knowledge of the field. With the full approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury he was summoned to England, and on Sunday, March 4, just two months after the death of Bishop Hill, he was consecrated in the historic chapel of Lambeth Palace. Five days later, at a great meeting in Exeter Hall to bid him God-speed, Bishop Bardsley, of Carlisle, used a very memorable sentence. He said: "Some of you may ask, 'Might not the men who have given their lives for Africa have done longer and more useful service in our home parishes? Wherefore this waste?' Brethren, *let us not take up words from the mouth of Judas Iscariot.*"

In a few weeks Bishop Tugwell was back in Africa, and at once shouldered the burdens of his new office, arranging matters in Lagos and the Yoruba Country and then visiting the stations of the delta and up the Niger. Naturally, after the

experiences of those terrible January weeks, many were anxious for him ; but he was already acclimatized and soon proved himself the man for the post. A new era had dawned for the Mission that had known so many setbacks.

. . . . . .

Long before Bishop Tugwell took charge, the troubles in the Yoruba Country had ended. It would be idle to pretend that the work had not suffered as a result of the events that disturbed the Mission between 1867 and 1880 (narrated in chapter X) ; but the churches were not overthrown. Indeed, when thrown back upon their own resources they had learned to fend for themselves. The African workers had done nobly, particularly the Rev. James Johnson,[1] who, from a Lagos pastorate, had been sent to take charge of the whole Yoruba Mission. It was not an easy task ; it called for tact, and firmness, and patience, as well as courage, to keep the churches together and steer them through troubled seas of heathen bitterness and anti-English prejudice. He made great efforts to lead the churches to do more by way of self-support, and this pressure was misunderstood and resented by some of his flock. In 1880 it was found possible for European missionaries to return to the interior after an enforced absence of thirteen years.

At first it was not easy to rekindle in England an interest in the Yoruba Country. A new generation

[1] At a later stage (1900) the Rev. James Johnson became assistant bishop, with the oversight of the work in the delta.

had arisen that had forgotten the romantic days of Abeokuta and Ibadan, and knew not Townsend, Gollmer, and Hinderer. But in time interest began to revive and volunteers came forward. New stations were opened, and ere long the time came for unmarried women missionaries to be sent up-country as well as men. One very great change had taken place : the fear of Dahomian invasion had passed for ever, for as one result of the " scramble for Africa " the strong hand of France had been laid upon that once-dreaded kingdom ; in 1892 the Dahomian king went into exile, the army was disbanded, and peace came where hitherto it had been almost unknown.

The settlement of Bishop Oluwole in Lagos, with charge also of the Abeokuta and Ijebu districts, and of Bishop Phillips at Ode Ondo, in the interior, to take charge of the northern part of the Yoruba section, set Bishop Tugwell himself free to travel widely and give attention to the Niger Mission with its many problems.

The first of these to receive attention was the delta section, where, under Archdeacon Crowther the churches of Bonny and Brass, with their surrounding out-stations had reached a stage at which they felt able to shoulder their own burdens, both financial and administrative. They had very deeply resented the drastic policy of four years before, and while not breaking away from the Church of England, they had severed themselves from the direct control of the C.M.S. and had formed themselves

into a semi-independent "Delta Pastorate." While loyally recognizing the bishop as their "overseer," these churches desired a large measure of self-government, and to this difficult problem Bishop Tugwell applied himself. In drawing up a constitution for the Pastorate many perplexing and delicate questions necessarily emerged: personal feeling and national sentiment complicated the issues. But with rare tact and patience the bishop, assisted by Bishop Phillips, Archdeacon Crowther, H. H. Dobinson, and others, settled down to the task, and after nine weeks completed a proposed constitution, acceptable to all parties on the spot, and forwarded it to England for approval by the C.M.S. Committee and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

It was a notable accomplishment for the bishop's first year of office, and it greatly relieved what had for some time been a very difficult situation. "We must in future pursue a line of more trust in God and more trust in the Africans," wrote H. H. Dobinson, who for several years had gone through the thick of the troubles; "overmuch caution is as bad as rashness, and we seem to me to want a more trusting and generous policy towards the native African churches." In that spirit the new scheme for the Delta Pastorate was carried through. The bishop was greatly pleased with much that he saw of the work in that area, "a great and successful work, the like of which we have nothing on the Niger proper," wrote Dobinson. They found

Sunday congregations at Bonny varying from 1600 to 900. "Thanks be to God!" wrote Dobinson during his stay there with the bishop; "Bonny was a very difficult place to begin with, owing to bitter opposition and severe persecution. Now almost all love the Church." And he added :—

> Before Bishop Tugwell and I preached on Sunday last we were told that what we said would be repeated in six or seven different chapels far inland, and in the Ibo markets. Bonny people are remarkable for travelling and teaching. At places sixty, seventy, and eighty miles distant, where they go to buy palm oil for trade, they build for themselves rough prayer-houses and chapels and assemble themselves and others on Sundays. Two or three teachers will repeat word for word sermons they have heard in Bonny.

It soon became evident that the troubles on the Niger were slowly being overcome; unworthy members had been disciplined or expelled from the churches, unsatisfactory workers had been replaced, while, on the other hand, a few of the more worthy of those who had been so hastily dismissed were restored. A period of rebuilding had dawned. Best of all, Dobinson and Bishop Tugwell, by their never-failing tact, patience and goodwill, had won back the confidence of the churches. Racial feelings which had been aroused began to die down, and by degrees a friendly and helpful co-operation between the European missionaries and their African fellow workers greatly strengthened the Mission. Dobinson, who for half-a-dozen years had done splendid work at Onitsha, was made archdeacon, but within a year he died. In the Yoruba Country, a training institution, known as St. Andrew's College, was opened

at Oyo, for the training of teachers, catechists, and clergy. The Abeokuta mission celebrated its jubilee; new churches were built there and at Ibadan and other places, and a mission was planted in the Ijebu Country. The whole Mission was better staffed and under closer supervision than had been possible before. New life, pulsating through the diocese, soon discovered new outlets, and a new era of expansion began.

Meanwhile, the Royal Niger Company was steadily introducing a new order of things throughout its chartered territories. With a firm hand it was seeking to bring to an end the evils of inter-tribal war and slave raiding and to induce the chiefs, small and great, to rule on more humanitarian principles than aforetime. No doubt there were blunders, but slowly order grew out of chaos. Not unnaturally, there were from time to time local troubles. Tribes did not understand the new conditions, and chiefs, sensitive as to their rights, were not at ease under the rule of the Company ; some of them resented what they regarded as interference with their affairs. Occasionally a punitive expedition or a little war had to be organized against some gross offender, as, for example, when (in 1895) the people of several delta towns united in an attack upon Akassa, a trading port at the mouth of the Nun : the Europeans escaped by the timely arrival of a mail steamer, but there was a merciless massacre of Kroo boys and African clerks, some of whose bodies were carried back to the bush and

eaten. Two years later the members of a government mission to Benin were ambushed and killed. In each case a force was sent to punish the outrage.

Of much greater importance was the expedition against Bida on the Upper Niger. For many years it had been the head-quarters of notorious slave-raiding emirs who carried out big raids on both sides of the river. At last Sir George Goldie's patience was exhausted, and he resolved to crush the men who for the sake of slaves kept the country in a state of fear and unrest. Most people agreed that this drastic step was necessary for the safety and wellbeing of oppressed tribes under the protection of the Company. It was a short, sharp campaign ; within a month Bida was captured (January, 1897), and its ferocious Fulani rulers driven away. The power of slavery was broken in the Nupé Country, and on the Diamond Jubilee Day of Queen Victoria a decree was promulgated from the Company's head-quarters abolishing slavery throughout the Niger Territories.

Bishop Tugwell was eager to seize the new opportunity. He had himself visited Bida two years before its capture by the Company's forces, and almost immediately after its fall issued an appeal for missionaries to occupy it in the name of Christ. Since Crowther and Dr. Baikie visited it (just forty years before) it had grown into a great city with a population estimated at 50,000. It appeared to be a strategic centre for missionary activity. But the capture of the city was not followed up by British

occupation ; the Company's troops were withdrawn, the Fula emir returned, and for the moment it was deemed unsafe to station a missionary there.

But though Bishop Tugwell was prepared to wait his opportunity, he had no thought of dropping the project. Meanwhile, his thoughts turned further east to the Basa Country lying north of the Benué River. In 1896 he had journeyed as far inland as Keffi and in the following year stationed his first missionaries among the Basa people. It was the first organized work north of the rivers.

A still larger project was shaping itself in Bishop Tugwell's active mind, nothing less than the fulfilment of the mission to the Central Sudan for which Brooke and Robinson had laid down their lives. But that is a separate story and demands a separate chapter.

XV

"THE CENTRAL SUDAN"

1900 - 1903

ALL through the 'nineties the "Central Sudan" was engaging the minds of many Christian people. The passionate appeals of Graham Wilmot Brooke had awakened a response far beyond the immediate circle of the C.M.S. The death of Brooke and Robinson at Lokoja only served to increase the interest and call forth devotion and a readiness to sacrifice on behalf of the Hausa and Fulani peoples.

The Central Sudan was one of the greatest unreached mission fields of the world. It consisted mainly of the seven important Hausa kingdoms that together formed the empire of the Fula Sultan of Sokoto. Each of the seven states had its own Fula emir, or king, independent in his own dominion but sending annual tribute to the sultan. It is a land of great walled cities and towns, each with its cluster of surrounding villages. The Hausas alone were estimated to number at least 15,000,000, and another 5,000,000 were believed to use the Hausa language. They are a fine Negroid race, well-built and of splendid physique, a nation of peace-loving traders and agriculturists. Their rulers, the Fulani conquerors of the land, were warlike, born to rule, and much given to slave raiding.

Part of the tribute to Sokoto was paid in slaves, and to keep up the supply, the emirs every year carried out raids on a large scale, usually against the pagan tribes in their own dominions. Though Sokoto was the sultan's capital, Kano was the larger and more important city. Discovered by Clapperton in 1823, and visited by Dr. Barth in 1856, it exercised a fascination second only to Timbuktu. Its huge mud walls are over twelve miles in circumference, and its population is estimated at over 60,000. It has been described as the Manchester of Central Africa, from the fact that it is a great manufacturing centre. To its gates caravans of camels bring cotton, hides, and indigo. From its markets the famous Kano leather goods and indigo cloth are carried far and wide. Within a radius of thirty miles round the city there are some forty walled towns and many villages, and its emir rules over 12,000 square miles and upwards of two millions of people. The written records of Kano date back a thousand years ; and it is a stronghold of the Moslem faith. Yet Kano was but one of the seven Hausa kingdoms. No wonder such a land attracted the attention of Christian people, and many coveted it for Jesus Christ.

In previous chapters we have seen how the mind of the apostolic Crowther turned more than once to this great land, and how Graham Wilmot Brooke planned the first organized efforts to reach it. Death frustrated their efforts, but though postponed, the idea was not abandoned. In England, in memory of John Alfred Robinson, the Hausa

Association was founded to study the Hausa language, prepare a dictionary, and translate the Scriptures into it. To this end in 1894, Robinson's brother, the Rev. Charles H. Robinson,[1] went out to Africa and with a small but well-equipped expedition succeeded in reaching Kano *via* the Benué and Keffi. He spent several months in the city, collected very valuable material for his dictionary, and returned to England. He was the first Christian to reach Kano with a missionary purpose in view, though he did not himself go as a missionary.

Meanwhile, private individuals, unconnected with any of the great missionary societies, were making plans for sending missionaries to Kano. One of them formed a small undenominational mission on "faith lines," and got together a band of young men at Tripoli, on the north coast of Africa, with a view to reaching Kano by crossing the Sahara with the Arab caravans. Attempt after attempt was made, from both Turkish and French territory, but they failed to get more than 400 miles into the interior, and ultimately the effort was abandoned. But four youthful members of that band went round to try the Niger route ; one died at the mouth of the river, two turned back when they had got some hundreds of miles into the interior, and the fourth, pressing forward alone, reached Kano, but soon afterwards was murdered by pagan robbers in the Yakoba Country on his way back to the Benué.

[1] Afterwards Canon Robinson, the well-known Editorial Secretary of the S.P.G. and editor of *The East and the West*.

Wilmot Brooke's death aroused interest in yet another quarter—America, and an interdenominational mission devised a plan for a chain of stations from Sierra Leone to Hausaland. Then a band of three young men from Canada, ill-equipped and without any real understanding of the task before them, attempted the Lagos-Niger route. One died, one was invalided home, and the third, Gowans, pressed bravely on, with neither provisions, money, nor experience, and the darkness closed around him. Fleeced, robbed, and despised, he was ultimately found dying, and was buried at the village of Gierku, in the very heart of Hausaland.

It was by this time evident that, humanly speaking, the real hope of evangelizing Hausaland lay with the C.M.S., and the task laid down by Brooke and Robinson was never wholly dropped either by the Committee in England or by their workers in Africa. Lewis Nott, of the Niger Mission, felt the burden of it laid upon his heart and the Committee gave him permission to proceed. Bishop Tugwell entered heart and soul into the project, and it was with a view to reconnoitring the country that, in 1897, he and Nott went together up the Benué to Loko and thence overland to Keffi (the first stage on the route to Kano) as recorded in our last chapter. As a result of that journey the bishop wrote to *The Times* appealing for volunteers for a new effort to reach Kano. At first there was no response ; but ultimately Nott secured three men and took them to Tripoli for training in work among

Moslems and for language study. Again there was disappointment. Nott's health gave way and he had to give up all thought of leading the venture.

Bishop Tugwell was not the man to let such a project fall through. The three men were ready to go forward, and he resolved himself to lead them to Kano.

On January 22, 1900, the expedition started from Lagos. It consisted of Bishop Tugwell, the three men who had been trained at Tripoli (the Rev. J. Claude Dudley-Ryder, the Rev. A. E. Richardson, and Dr. W. R. S. Miller) and Mr. J. R. Burgin, a lay missionary who took charge of the baggage and supplies. The plan was to travel overland through the Yoruba forests to the Niger. Such a journey required very considerable equipment, and also supplies of goods for barter, for cowries, at that time the chief and almost the only currency, were of such low value that a "bag" containing 20,000 was only worth 5*s.*[1] No less than 240 carriers were required. Mr. Bako, a devoted Nupé Christian, also accompanied the party and rendered splendid service in obtaining information and in conducting negotiations with the chiefs through whose villages or towns the expedition passed.

The first part of the journey lay through familiar forest-covered country, passing the established mission stations of Ibadan and Oyo, and thence *via* Ilorin to the Niger. Crossing the river at Jebba

[1] In those days the table of values ran : 40 cowries = one string ; 50 strings = one head ; 10 heads = one bag.

(where the *Dayspring* had been wrecked over forty years before) they entered the Sudan, a land of undulated plains, dotted with rocky hills. In the autumn the country is covered with tall grass, but each year, about Christmas time, it is burned down by the great fires that sweep over the plains,[1] leaving them dry and barren. The party advanced slowly, riding on horses, but of necessity keeping pace with the carriers, whose speed, burdened as they were with head-loads, was slow. All sorts of troubles beset the path. African carriers are proverbially difficult to manage, starting when it suits them, and resting when they feel inclined. Several times there were mutinies among them, and once 127 deserted; they soon returned, demanded more pay, and then, on being refused, returned home in a body. New carriers, some of whom were Hausas, had to be obtained before the expedition could go forward, but at one place it was necessary to leave much of the baggage behind. The carriers from the south of the river, knowing that they were crossing country where slave raiding was common, were thoroughly frightened and eager to get back to their own land. It soon became obvious that the news of the expedition had spread far and wide in the mysterious way that news travels in Africa. Some village chiefs were afraid to receive the missionaries;

[1] The present writer, in crossing this very country, saw several such fires, one of which must have been at least two miles wide, a vast advancing wall of flame and smoke. It was night and the effect was lurid and awe-inspiring.

others put on a friendly demeanour, but were obviously perplexed and welcomed their visitors with caution. More than once the frightened people prepared to flee from their villages and seek refuge among the rocks on the hill-tops. Mounted messengers were observing their movements and riding from town to town to report upon them. It was evident that the chiefs and emirs were consulting one another as to what should be done ; and as the mission party advanced the nervousness of the rulers increased. The fact that the white strangers were friendly and peaceable, and had no guns, only added to the perplexity that their coming created.

The key to the situation lay in the fact that the expedition, quite unintentionally, coincided with very important political changes. The British Government had recently concluded agreements with Germany and France by which practically the whole of Hausaland became a British Protectorate. On January 1, 1900, three weeks before Bishop Tugwell's expedition started from Lagos, the British Government took over all the territorial and administrative responsibilities previously vested in the Royal Niger Company. The great emirates of the Fulani Empire had by a stroke of the pen become the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, a change about which those most concerned—namely, the Fulani rulers and their peoples—had not been in any way consulted. At the very time that Bishop Tugwell and his party were entering the Sudan, the

Sultan of Sokoto and the emirs of the subject states were being notified that the Queen of England had undertaken to rule over them, and a strong patrol of the West African Frontier Force was working up the Kaduna River to find a suitable place for the head-quarters of Sir Frederick Lugard, the new High Commissioner. We can hardly wonder that the nerves of the Fulani emirs were on edge, and that in their own minds quite naturally they connected the missionary expedition with the advance of the W.A.F.F. up the Kaduna.

It was under such conditions that Bishop Tugwell and his companions rode slowly forward across the sun-baked plains of the Sudan. First one and then another went down with fever or dysentery and had to be carried in a hammock ; there were the daily difficulties with the carriers, and the constant difficulty about places to camp, for in town and village alike, both rulers and people wanted the white men to camp outside their walls.

On April 6 the party reached the great walled city of Zaria, the first capital of an emirate to be visited, and were received cautiously but kindly by the emir, a notorious slave raider. When Dr. Miller explained to him their object in coming he seemed satisfied, and not a little surprised to hear that they knew nothing whatever of the British force that was encamped only two days' march from his town. It is more than probable that he did not believe them. Their stay in Zaria was a very happy one, for they secured the confidence and goodwill of all the people,

and the emir seemed eager to detain them. He warned them that dangers lay ahead, and that the Emir of Kano would not receive them kindly as he had done. "They will keep you at a distance and treat you coldly," he said; "the Kano people think much of themselves, and their emir puts on 'side.'" Had their minds not been set on Kano it is possible they might have elected to stay in Zaria. Subsequent events proved that it might have been better had they done so, for the people were eager to have them, and the city was an excellent centre for missionary work, and in importance second only to Kano itself.

Finding them resolute in their determination to go forward, the Emir of Zaria provided them with an escort and a guide, and sent on in advance a letter to disarm opposition and fear. On the day they left, he sent them a special messenger, saying :—

> Thank the white men for their present, and not only for this but for the way they have dwelt at peace in my town. Their stay has done nothing but good. I wish them God-speed. May God be with them.

So with goodwill on all hands, Bishop Tugwell and his party passed out through the gates of Zaria and started on the last stage of their journey. They estimated that it would take them eight days to reach Kano.

The bishop had written in advance to tell the Emir of Kano of their approach to his dominions; but the emir on his part had determined not to receive them and had sent messengers to turn them

back. Fortunately the missionaries took another road and did not meet them. But it became increasingly evident that they were regarded on every hand with suspicion. "The news of our approach had spread throughout the whole Sudan," wrote A. E. Richardson. "Messengers were hurrying along the caravan routes with all speed. Richly dressed courtiers were coursing along, bearing the latest news and still later rumours. The Sultan of Sokoto was dispatching envoys to Kano, to Zaria, to Katsena. Runners were speeding from city to city. 'What is to be done,' they asked. 'The *peaceful* white men are coming—and coming unarmed.' Then, behind all this was the proclamation . . . to resist the white man and do all they could to hinder the spread of the white man's religion."[1]

Quite unconscious of the alarm their approach was causing, the missionaries steadily pursued their journey, and in two or three days they entered the territories of the Emir of Kano. At once they became aware of an even greater spirit of hostility. The chiefs of towns and villages did not come to greet them, but excused themselves on the ground that they were very ill and unable to see the visitors.

At last, on April 19, 1900, the great, red-mud walls of the city loomed up through the dust of the hot, sandy plain. It was a scorching day, "the sun

[1] In the following account of the visit to Kano we have in the main followed Mr. Richardson's narrative.

literally roasting the parched-up country;" and the little band of missionaries, wearied with the dust and fatigue of their long journey, were utterly jaded. But when they looked up and saw Kano's walls "reaching up to heaven," they burst into hymns of praise, and singing the *Te Deum* they entered the tunnel-like gateway, cut through the solid forty-foot mud wall, rejoicing that they had at last reached their goal.

Soon a company of horsemen came to meet them, led by the *maaji* (the treasurer) who had been deputed to receive the visitors and look after them. "You will see the emir to-morrow," he said. Then, escorted by prancing horsemen, on horses decked with silken tassels and trappings of leather dyed red, yellow, and green, the messengers of Christ rode slowly on, through the cultivated lands and gardens of date palms that lie within the walls.[1] until the inhabited part of the city was reached and they were settled in a large, cool house, built, like all the others, of red mud. Kano was then, and still is, unspoiled by foreign influence, an oriental rather than an African city, with narrow streets of well-built mud houses, and amazing markets. The whole city throbs with industrial and commercial life. The great palace and mosque are splendid specimens of what the mud architects can accomplish in mud.

Early on the following morning the bishop and his companions were led out of the city to Faniso,

[1] The author was upon one occasion escorted into Kano (on a visit to the emir) in similar style.

six miles away, where the emir was then in residence at a country palace. They were conducted by the maaji and a cavalcade of a dozen brilliantly-dressed courtiers, each missionary having one told off to ride beside him. The Fulani are magnificent riders, and have their horses under perfect control ; they can dash forward at high speed, shaking their spears or swords and raising clouds of dust, and then pull up almost instantly, their horses rearing back upon their haunches. On that ride, the visitors were carefully instructed as to court etiquette ; they were on no account to *stand* in the royal presence.

On arrival at Faniso, they were shown into a mud house and kept there for three hours, until the emir deigned to see them. Tired of waiting, they made themselves tea and then lay down and slept !

At last the summons came. Through streets crowded with excited people who had come out from Kano, there rode another cavalcade headed by a courtier, obviously of high rank, who pranced up and reined in his horse before Bishop Tugwell. " The waziri ! The waziri ! " the people cried, as the second man in the kingdom dismounted to greet his master's strangers[1] and conduct them to the palace for the momentous interview. On reaching the palace, the missionaries were led through courtyards into the Judgment Hall, crowded with spectators who were sitting on the floor ; their sun umbrellas were snatched from them, and amid

[1] In West Africa a visitor is called a " stranger," and a host refers to his guest as " my stranger."

A STREET IN KANO *Photograph by the Author*

The houses of Kano are well built of mud, and are often covered with decorative devices like those on the left of the picture. The roofs are flat. Notice the drain spouts to prevent water lodging on the roofs in the rainy season.

a blare of trumpets they were ushered into the Hall of Private Audience.

At the far end of the dark, vaulted chamber, on a dais covered with rich crimson cloth, sat the great Emir of Kano. Around him, seated in rows on mats upon the mud floor, were the members of his court, ready at every opportunity to greet him with cries of "*Zaki! Zaki!* (Lion! Lion!)," an expression implying power, strength, and majesty. The emir's face could not be seen, for his rich black silk turban, folded in Fulani fashion round the lower part of the face as well as round the head, concealed all save his eyes and forehead.

In a moment it was evident that the interview was to be a stormy one. The missionaries respectfully saluted, but the emir returned the greeting most curtly, and turning to Mr. Bako (as the official "speaker" of the party) brusquely demanded: "Now why have they come? Are they soldiers?"

"No, they are not soldiers."

"Are they traders?"

"No."

"Have they come to see the world?"

"No."

"Then why have they come?"

"We are religious teachers; we are Christians. We have come to ask permission to teach your people."

"We have enough mallams of our own," retorted the emir angrily. "What will they teach? Will they teach the Koran?" And then, without giving

time for a reply, he blazed forth in loud tones: "They must go back! They must go back! I will not allow them to stay in my town. I *sallame* them!"

That word "sallame" is one that is untranslatable. It is virtually a polite but very definite and final dismissal. You cannot leave a city until the king has "sallamed" you; but when once you have been "sallamed" you cannot remain. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Bishop Tugwell urged the emir to have patience. "We have come from a far country," he declared. "We have been travelling many months, meeting with many difficulties and dangers, and spending much money. Now we have reached this great city, and you bid us go back! What will the world say? All the world knows that we have come here. All will know that you have sent us away. We are peaceful men. We bring glad tidings. We are messengers of God. . . ."

"Blasphemy!" roared the angry emir. "Messengers of *God*! That word settles it. You must go at once!"

"Let the emir hear me," said the bishop quietly. "We are not only teachers. We have a doctor. He will heal your sick people. . . ."

But the emir merely blurted out: "We have all the medicine we need in the Koran."

"Let the emir appoint men to watch us," urged Bishop Tugwell, changing his line of appeal. "Let them stay in our house night and day and spy upon

us. If we do well, let us stay. If we do ill, punish us. We are your friends."

"You are *not* my friends," was the answer. "You cannot stay. Listen. You have entered my kingdom without my permission. Now you must go! You have done wrong in coming here. Go!"

"Let us remain if only for a few days."

"How long do you wish to stay?"

"As long as the emir pleases."

"No, no! Say how long."

The bishop suggested a month, to which the angry monarch sarcastically demanded: "*Which* month? This one or the next?" Then in wrath he cried: "Go away from my presence. If you wish to live in my town you must first go to Sokoto and get written permission from the King of the Moslems" (*i.e.* the Sultan of Sokoto).

"Very well," said the bishop, snatching at any straw of hope. "Let the emir send to Sokoto for permission, and meanwhile we will stay here and wait till the reply comes."

"No! If you want permission you must fetch it yourselves. But in the meanwhile you must go."

At this display of inflexible royal sternness the enthusiastic courtiers cried again and again: "Zaki! Zaki! May God give the emir long life! Zaki! Zaki!"

It was futile to prolong the interview. Emir Aliu was a usurper. He had won his throne by the sword and spear, and by them had held it for half-a-dozen years. No man is so suspicious and fearful

as a usurper. Aliu was suspicious of the white man, and what he had heard of their power made him fear lest it should be turned against himself.

After that stormy ten minutes' interview, the missionaries were led back to the little mud house, there to wait a further three hours, with a temperature of ninety-five degrees inside, until the maaji came to them with the emir's decision. Looking very serious, this man, who personally was quite friendly to his charges, said : " Listen to the word of the emir. You are allowed three days to do your business. The emir gives you a guide to conduct you through the city. On the third day you must go or take the consequences." This then was the end of their hopes and plans and toils. Weary and discouraged they returned to Kano to begin preparations for the homeward journey.

All sorts of rumours spread through the city during those days. People terrorized the carriers by telling them that they would all be killed or sold as slaves if they did not escape at once. Each night they were told that their throats would be cut before morning. Bako heard that a proclamation had been made that any woman who took food to the missionaries would be put to death. As best they could the little party made arrangements for the weary journey that was before them, and on the Sunday they together partook of the Holy Communion, the first time it was ever celebrated in Kano. The time allowed for rest and reorganizing their expedition was extended to seven days, but no further

grace could be obtained. The emir refused to see them again, and there was no alternative to withdrawal. Before leaving, Bishop Tugwell sent to the emir a letter written in Hausa. It ran thus :—

In the Name of God the Great One, Maker of the World. This comes from the hand of the white men to Aliu, Emir of Kano, with friendship and salutations thousands of thousands until weariness.

May God prolong your life, O Emir! We have received your message, O Emir. We are sad at the Emir's word. We regret the Emir insists upon us leaving this town. Our hearts are disappointed because the Emir does not receive us. We have come from afar; our journey has been with suffering and difficulty. The motive of our coming was nothing but good. Our desire was nothing but mutual profit and friendship between us and you and your people; peradventure we might bring them highest prosperity. We expected to sit down in peace. But since you do not receive us, we honour your command and go out from this city of Kano by the Power of God. If it please God, the day will come when you will send for us and give us permission to enter your city again and receive us in peace. God grant it. Amen.

We thank you for your gracious kindness. We thank you for giving us a guide to escort us. We part in peace. May God grant you prosperity and give you peace and prolong your life. Amen.

On April 27 they passed out of the gate of Kano and set their faces once more towards Zaria. The chiefs of the towns they passed through had been instructed to provide them with all they needed, but they were forbidden to receive "dashes." "It is more than our heads are worth," they said. News reached them as they journeyed that the maaji, because he had shown kindness to them, had been fined 400,000 cowries and that his steward had been more seriously punished; there were grounds for fearing that he had been beheaded in the market place.

On May 3 the party reached Zaria once more, hoping to be able to stay there. But the situation had changed. The emir, formerly so friendly, declared that, since the Emir of Kano had declined to receive them, he himself could no longer do so, and he repeated the excuse that they must ask the permission of the Sultan of Sokoto. Probably, during the intervening weeks, there had been letters passing between Zaria, Kano, and Sokoto, and a common decision had been arrived at to get rid of the English. Moreover, in the interval Colonel Morland with his force had visited Zaria, and had informed the emir that Queen Victoria was now ruling the country through General Lugard ; and it is more than likely that this may have played upon the emir's nerves. There was no way open but to fall back on Gierku, a small town of 300 inhabitants, thirty odd miles to the south, where a small British force was then encamped ; and with this in view they left Zaria. As they passed out of the streets of the city crowds gathered to see them depart, and they followed the missionaries out of the gate, shouting again and again : " Good-bye *until you return* ! " It was a happy augury for the future.

Gierku was the place where Gowans, the young Canadian, had died, and Dudley-Ryder remarked as they drew near to the town : " We must see poor Gowan's grave." Little did he think that within a few days he himself would be laid to rest beside him. He died of dysentery on June 1. Bishop Tugwell, Richardson, and Miller all went

down with fever, and Miller was at death's door ; they were nursed through by Burgin and Bako. Then Burgin went down, and Richardson had to be invalided home. Colonel Kemball of the W.A.F.F. suggested that the bishop with Miller and Burgin should retire still further south, but agreed to their remaining at Gierku if they desired to do so. They hung on, and succeeded in opening a dispensary and a small church. But the difficulties increased. The Sultan of Sokoto, and his vassal the Emir of Zaria, brought pressure to bear, and on January 14, 1901, the party retired to Loko on the River Benué, there to " hold on " for five years.

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In 1903 matters in Northern Nigeria came to a final crisis. Slave raiding was still going on, and peoples under British protection were being attacked. The Sultan and the Emir of Kano were defiant and insolent, and the only solution was to take action against them. A small force advanced from Zaria and stormed the great walls of Kano. At first the shells merely buried themselves in the thickness of mud and did no damage, but at last a weak spot was found ; a gate was forced, and in a few hours the city was in the hands of the British. The emir had saved himself by flight. Sokoto fell a few weeks later, and a new era dawned for Hausaland.

XVI

NIGERIA IN TRANSITION

1900–1930

THE "scramble for Africa" in the 'eighties and 'nineties may in some ways have been an unseemly business; but in its results it has been more than justified, for it has worked out for the redemption of West Africa. The whole of that vast stretch of country from the Gambia to beyond the Cameroons (with the solitary exception of the Black Republic of Liberia), a distance of more than 2000 miles as the crow flies, passed under the rule of Great Britain, Germany, or France. With surprisingly little trouble the great protectorates were effectively occupied and brought under control. In most instances it was enough for a small force, or even a mere patrol, to march through a stretch of country, and by pacific means, or by the harmless display of the power of guns or shells, to induce the tribal chiefs to accept the overlordship of the white man and agree to his very mild terms. Tribal wars and slave raiding were prohibited and soon absolutely ceased. Troublesome rulers who would not observe the new conditions were deposed and in some cases exiled. In this way the King of Dahomey was deposed by the French, and the King of Ashanti, the Sultan of Sokoto, and the Emir of Kano by the British. Many chiefs of smaller calibre had also to

be dealt with ; and by such steps the *pax europea* was established throughout West Africa.

These far-reaching changes, that transformed the whole of West Africa in general, affected Nigeria in particular ; for the word " Nigeria " was now coming into use to describe all the lands that fall within the immediate scope of this book.[1]

The fact that this great region was adopted as a protectorate, rather than annexed as a possession, led quite naturally to the policy of ruling through the African chiefs instead of directly through British officials. As we have already seen, Nigeria is the home of a great assortment of tribes, mainly of the Negro race, but extraordinarily different from one another in physique, in language, in dress, in customs, and in tribal life and organization. There are underlying resemblances, due to their common stock, but in many details they differ from one another. Take for example the great Egba, Yoruba, Ibo, Nupé, Hausa, and Fula peoples ; they differ as widely as a similar number of European nations. In addition to these large and organized tribes there are numerous smaller ones, each with its own chief and code of laws, unwritten, but very precise.

It is entirely wrong to suppose that the Africans are a people without law and ruled solely by the whim or caprice of their chiefs. Every tribe has its

[1] For a time this vast protectorate was divided into Southern and Northern Provinces; but in 1914 the two sections were united under one central government with its head-quarters at Lagos.

organized life and definite laws that cover every department of social and individual conduct. These laws have been transmitted orally from one generation to another by that marvellous memory that the Africans have so wonderfully cultivated. The chief himself is bound by these laws and is expected to administer them ; in consultation with his council of chiefs, he hears disputes, tries offenders, and generally attends to the public business. These laws are essentially African, the outcome of African conditions and African ideas. To Europeans they may seem strange or even unjust, as, for example, in cases where descent is reckoned on the female side, and where a man's heir-at-law is his sister's son instead of his own son. It is extremely difficult for an Englishman to administer justice for such people, for a decision he may regard as strictly just and equitable might seem to the people a most flagrant injustice. The African naturally understands his tribal laws far better than he can possibly understand the (to him) revolutionary laws and customs of the white man. To impose British law upon Nigeria would have been to create chaos and to court trouble for generations.

A wiser policy has prevailed. Wherever a chief or king accepted the new allegiance, he was confirmed in his position as the lawful ruler, he on his part promising to rule justly according to the laws of the tribe, to hold human life sacred, to abolish human sacrifice and cannibalism (where they existed), and to refrain from slave raiding or making

war upon his neighbours. The Government undertook to support and maintain him in his office so long as he remained faithful to his contract. Nominally each tribe continues to be governed by its own laws, administered by its own chief in council. Each chief is held responsible for law and order and for the raising of taxes in his chiefdom. A certain portion of the revenue he retains to meet the cost of his government and a fixed sum for his personal salary, and the salaries for his officials, police, and other services. The remainder of the revenue he hands over to the Government for the overhead costs of administration. The system of taxation is usually along the lines of a head-tax on men and youths ; it has to a very large extent reduced the possibility of the people being unjustly squeezed or plundered by a rapacious chief or his underlings.

While each chief [1] is semi-independent in his own dominions, the government supervision is maintained by a system of district officers, each of whom is responsible for the oversight of a large area that may contain several chiefdoms. The district officers in turn are responsible to the Resident who has charge of a still larger political area known as a province. The political officials, district and provincial, are the steel framework of the whole

[1] Some Europeans have a strange habit of applying the word "king" to every African chief or village headman they come across. There is no sense in this practice, and it should be dropped. Every African language has separate words to describe each grade, and they are never confused, *i.e.* headmen, chiefs, paramount chiefs, and kings (or emirs).

administration. Southern Nigeria is divided into twelve provinces, and Northern Nigeria into fifteen. Southern and Northern Nigeria have each a Lieutenant-Governor, both of whom are responsible to the Governor of the whole of Nigeria. This system of government through African chiefs, supervised by British officials, has now been in use for more than thirty years and has, on the whole, proved remarkably successful. No one so much as contemplates departure from it, or even any very serious revision of its main features. With all its weaknesses it has proved to be better than the systems of government in South Africa, under which many millions of Africans live under laws they have no share in making and which are contrary to their nature and instincts.

One of the advantages of the West African system is that it enables the political officers to have the chiefs under their care in a sort of friendly tutelage, advising and sometimes cautioning them (or even threatening them, should need arise), and all the time helping them to understand the sound principles of enlightened government. Of course, the tendency is for the African tribal organization to become more and more impregnated with British methods and ideas. The present stage is manifestly one of transition.

An excellent example is that of Kano. Prior to British occupation it was a typical, old-style Moslem city and kingdom. Injustice and oppression were rampant. The rulers raised revenue by tyranny

and bribes ; the judges were corrupt and sold justice to the highest bidder. Slave raiding and slave trading went on unchecked. It is estimated that one-third of the population were slaves. While Canon Robinson was in Kano in 1894 a thousand slaves were brought into the city on a single occasion as a result of one raiding expedition. Robinson found the slave market in full swing, and that the prices ranged from £7 to £10 for a girl of about fourteen, while a young man of eighteen would fetch about £6, and a man of thirty £4. Kano at that time was sending one hundred slaves per year (in addition to large supplies of cloth) as tribute to the Sultan of Sokoto. The change came with the capture of the city by Colonel Morland in 1903. The emir, who by his folly had brought himself to ruin, fled. Whereupon Sir Frederick Lugard summoned the waziri and the Fulani chiefs, explained to them the policy and desires of the British Government, and invited them to elect a new emir. They chose a brother of the late ruler. War and slave raiding immediately ceased, and rulers and people soon found that the white men had come to be their friends and helpers, not their oppressors. The Moslem Koranic law was confirmed ; the judicial system was overhauled, and *alkalis* (judges) were appointed at a fixed salary, the chief alkali receiving a salary of about £500 a year, while the emir himself receives a salary of £5000, the waziri £1000, and other officials in proportion. The system of taxation was revised and put on a sound

footing, a force of Hausa police was organized, and a public works department was created to improve or construct roads, and other developments of public importance were undertaken.

In all these things the Fulani rulers have co-operated with the British Resident and his officers. They have, on the whole, proved apt pupils, and the transformation has been little short of marvellous. One experienced observer writes :—

> Still more to admire—for, after all, conquering is only a feat of arms—is the sagacity which produced the policy in full operation to-day, that of a people ruled by those whom they have selected, and rulers and people thoroughly co-operating with the governing Power in administering the affairs of the country. History furnishes no example where that has been done with anything like the same material in a similar period.[1]

The Emir of Kano, with the aid of his waziri and other officials, rules not only the great city, but the whole emirate of 12,000 square miles with a population of 1,760,000 ; the chiefs of the towns and the headmen of the villages are responsible to him. Thus, " we rule through the native rulers and leaders of the people." No doubt, in some parts of Nigeria, bribery and corruption and some oppression still exist, but the benefit of the British system of administration is deep and wide. Constant vigilance, however, is needed, lest through slackness things slip back into bad ways.

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British territorial interests in Nigeria are the

[1] John Raphael, late travel editor of *The African World*.

outcome of the development of commercial enterprise, and it is only natural that the policy of "opening up the country" should be dictated very largely by commercial or industrial considerations.

In the early days, such Africans as desired to trade with the white man brought their produce to the trading depots in dug-out canoes, or tramped weary miles along the narrow forest paths carrying loads on their heads. In this manner the people of Abeokuta and the Yoruba Country brought their goods to Lagos, and returned home carrying the white man's goods in the same way. In the delta region, the people brought their palm oil in casks by canoe to the traders whose vessels lay anchored in the lagoons and estuaries. Then, as the main stream of the Niger was opened up, small river steamers carried cargoes to and from the riverside stations. But such methods of transport only touched comparatively small areas of the country, and in the interests of trade, as well as of efficient administration, other means became necessary.

A great step forward was taken in 1893 when the first railway line began to be constructed from Lagos into the interior of the Yoruba Country. With amazing skill and patience the surveyors and engineers worked steadily forward, through dense forests and across swamps. Rivers and streams (many of them subject to sudden floods), had to be bridged, and many superstitions and prejudices had to be overcome.

In 1901 the first section of that railway, from

Lagos, past Abeokuta, to Ibadan (a distance of 120 miles) was opened to traffic. From the stations *en route* feeder roads were cut into the forest, so that goods could be brought from remote towns and villages to the line, to be carried thence by the iron horse to Lagos. Slowly, year by year, that line stretched out, mile after mile, still further into the interior. In 1909 it reached Jebba on the Upper Niger, over 300 miles from Lagos. But it did not stop even there. On the opposite side of the river the engineers resumed their labours, and the railway was extended across those scorching plains that Bishop Tugwell and his companions had traversed so wearily only a few years earlier, until, in 1912, the sound of the steam whistle was heard in Kano itself, and a station was built on the plain two miles outside the ancient walls. For several years the trains were taken across the broad stream of the Niger on a large steam ferry ; but soon the skill of the engineers overcame even that formidable obstacle, and by making use of Jebba Island in midstream, two great bridges were thrown across, the one 1295 feet and the other of 500 feet in length, and to-day passengers may travel from Lagos[1] to Kano in a comfortable train with dining saloon and sleeping cars, in about forty-eight hours, the journey that took Bishop Tugwell three months ! To-day, *down* that line come the products of the

[1] For some years the station was at Iddo across the lagoon to the north of Lagos itself. Now the trains start from Apapa (opposite Lagos) where a fine new wharf has been constructed.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH THE IMO SWAMP

By courtesy of the Crown Agents for the Colonies

land : cotton, ground nuts, cattle skins and hides (tanned and untanned), palm oil and palm kernels, salt, dates, and cocoa ; while *up* that line go all the hundred-and-one things that Europe manufactures and Africa buys. In Kano markets one may purchase anything and everything that can be seen at a Woolworth's bazaar, and a good deal more. Moreover, down that line came granite from the hills around Abeokuta for the building of the harbour wharfs and the breakwater at Lagos, which have converted it into a deep-water port into which the largest liners on the West African service can safely enter.

Another railway has been constructed from Port Harcourt, on the Bonny River, right through the heart of the Ibo Country, and in 1924 it reached Makurdi on the Benué. Thence it runs across the Sudan until it joins the Kano line at Kaduna, the seat of government for Northern Nigeria. Thus it is now easy to get to Kano by two lines running east and west of the Niger[1]; and from both of them branch lines are being extended to tap country still undeveloped. The Eastern Railway serves the coal and tin fields of the areas it touches and is thus developing the mining possibilities of Nigeria.

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Useful as railways are, there is another factor that seems destined to play an equally important

[1] See map inside the back cover.

part in the opening of Africa to western commerce and civilization, the petrol engine. We have spoken of " feeder roads." At first they were used mainly by carriers who marched one behind the other in single file, following the custom acquired by centuries of tramping along the narrow paths of the forest. We have seen men and boys, reeking with perspiration in the tropical heat and dust, rolling great casks of palm oil along the road to a railway station that was possibly thirty or forty miles away. But gradually the motor lorry is providing easier transport. To-day the amount of motor traffic is amazing, and the lorries are used almost as much for carrying passengers as for conveying goods. Many of them are virtually motor 'buses. They tear along the forest roads at a dangerous speed, and accidents are becoming frequent. The new facilities provided by the motor traffic has led to a rapid increase in the number of roads. Already Nigeria has some 4000 miles of roads properly surfaced and bridged for motor traffic, and several thousands of miles of rough pioneer roads.

It is possible to go by motor car from Lagos, *via* Ibadan and Benin, to Calabar—a distance of 600 miles. A 250 miles motor road runs from Zaria to Sokoto, and another from the railhead at Kano to Katsina, 100 miles further north. New roads are under construction all the time, and what thirty years ago was a land of footpaths is becoming a land of highways. The forests ring with the shrill sound

of motor hooters, and here and there one comes across the wrecked remains of a lorry that has upset into a deep ditch and has been abandoned. African chiefs and well-to-do men as well as Europeans, are now the owners of cars. The great mud gateway to the palace at Kano has been widened to admit the emir's car. In the Yoruba Country, too, such rulers as the Alafin of Oyo, the Alaké of Abeokuta, the Owa of Ilesha, and the Oni of Ife have first-class private motor cars, usually a Rolls-Royce or a Daimler.

. . . . . .

The railways and roads are transforming Nigeria and profoundly influencing the life of the people. They are *highways of European civilization*, along which new ideas and new influences are penetrating almost every part of the country. They simplify the task of administration, for by them the representatives of Government can travel swiftly to remote places. They greatly aid in the suppression of the old, cruel practices. So long as the dark rites of fetishism could be carried on in the depths of the bush without fear of detection there was little hope of their being overthrown. But every new road that is cut through the primeval forest lets in the light of the new day, and makes it easier to insure that the laws against cruelty and bloodshed are obeyed. The Government is not a mysterious force far away in Lagos, too distant from the villages to seem real, but a living and vital factor at their very door.

The strong arm of Government reaches far ; and if we cannot say that cannibalism, human sacrifice, and infanticide have absolutely gone, we can at least say with confidence that they are rapidly disappearing.

The railways and roads are *highways for commerce* by which goods from Europe are distributed to the people. Along them African traders, as well as the representatives of the great European firms, are pressing forward and opening wayside shops and more important depots in places hitherto unreached. Some energetic trader, possibly a Sierra Leonian, a Lagos man, or perhaps a Syrian, in his eagerness, will press on and open a little shop several miles ahead of his rivals. It may be a mere shanty composed of branches of trees and palm-leaf matting, but it is an outpost of commerce, and sells to the forest-village folk a hundred and one things they had never before seen.

In a few weeks that pioneer trader is outstripped by a rival who opens a similar shop a few miles further on, and it is a very simple matter for the motor lorries to come the few additional miles to bring him supplies of goods for sale. In this way people in remote villages are buying, almost at their own doors, such things as their fathers never dreamed of. In thousands of village homes, as well as in the towns, the old domestic utensils are giving place to new ones, and strange innovations are finding their way into the most primitive dwellings. White enamelled bowls, plates, and cups are

superseding calabashes ; hurricane lanterns with glass shades are taking the place of clay lamps and torches ; and knives, scissors, needles, sewing cotton, tools, mirrors, oil stoves, sewing machines, tinned foods, Lancashire cotton goods, bicycles, and many other useful articles are being bought eagerly by the people. Many African villagers can well afford such luxuries, for the whole country is feeling the stimulus of the increase of trade.

To us, as missionary workers, these wonderful roads and railways have yet another significance : they may become *highways for our God*. Along them the messengers of Christ may travel swiftly to the people they seek to reach. Little more than thirty years ago it took three or four days to journey from Lagos to Abeokuta ; to-day one may get there in less than five hours by train. A missionary in Ibadan can now go by car in less than two hours to St. Andrew's College at Oyo ; it used to take two days. We have seen that slow transport was one of the chief difficulties that Bishop Crowther had to contend with in working his huge diocese ; to-day, in many parts of the country, such difficulty if it has not ceased to exist, is at any rate greatly reduced.

But we must not close our eyes to the fact that the railways and roads bring new perils. They are carrying our civilization to the very doors of villagers who have had no preparation for it. People brought up in most primitive conditions are being plumped into the very vortex of our

mechanical and materialistic age. One keen observer has written thus :—

> Imagine Boadicea driving her chariot over a gorse-grown heath to a tarred macadamized road, and following that road to a city of concrete buildings, lit with electric light, supplied with water from a reservoir many miles away, with motor 'buses running along the streets, and a railway train panting a welcome to her. She would have to make some swift mental readjustments to keep her sanity. Either she must flee back to her heath and try to forget what she had seen, or attempt the still more difficult task of adapting herself at once to a world as strange to her as the planet Mars would be to us. Yet that is what is happening to-day to millions of Africans, and it is a rare thing for a white man to pause and ask if we are justified in thrusting so much upon the black man.

By the facilities for easy and cheap travel, we are drawing multitudes of people from their homes ; the land is set a-moving ; simple folk are whirled from place to place. Having worked for a few years at Lagos, Port Harcourt, or the coal fields, the villager returns home, if he returns at all, detribalized, and too often to be detribalized is to be demoralized. In West Africa, tribal customs and fetish taboos take the place of moral laws ; remove or discredit them and you at once take away such restraints as had hitherto been recognized.

In some parts of the West African forests the traveller may come to a place where two footpaths cross, and there see the grass and creepers cut away for a yard or two and a number of articles for sale laid out on the ground, yams, bananas, oranges, calabashes, dried fish, and so on, *a shop without a shopkeeper*. There is a small calabash into which the passer-by must put the price of the article he takes

away. What is the secret of it? Look more closely and you will see, tied perhaps to a piece of bamboo, a little bundle of utter rubbish, a couple of chicken bones perhaps, with a feather, a tuft of grass, smeared with clay or congealed blood. It is a fetish, set as a policeman to guard that bush shop. The fear of the spirit that is believed to dwell in the fetish will deter the passer-by from stealing so much as a banana. *Destroy the fear of that spirit and you remove the moral restraint that it exercises.* Every European in Nigeria, whether trader or political officer, Public Works Department man or missionary, is by his daily life and conduct destroying fetishism whether he knows it or not. The African "boy" who waits upon his master, and brings him his whisky and soda, soon discovers that the white man despises the fetish, and he himself, as a result, begins to lose his fear of it. Unless some new law, some new "fear" comes to take possession of that "boy's" heart his last state may be worse than his first.

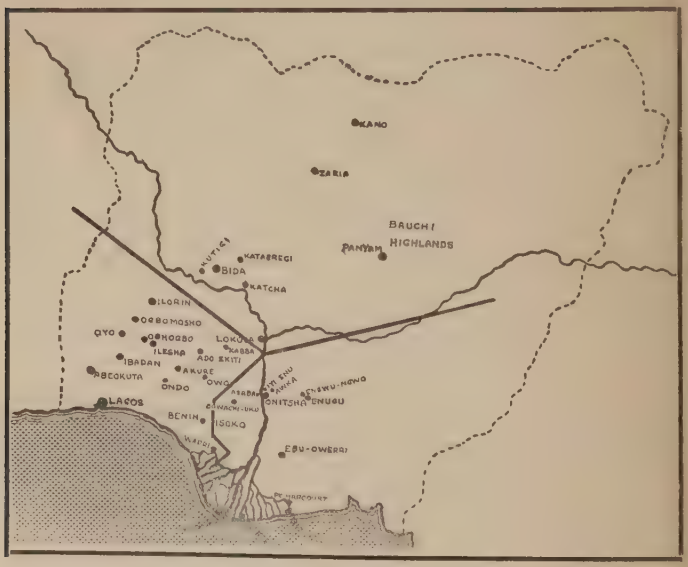
By the swift introduction of our western civilization we are destroying the old spiritual conceptions of the pagan African, and unless we give him something better, we inevitably open the door to materialism and secularism. As the fear of the fetish wanes, it is our task to implant the love of God.

XVII

MISSION ACTIVITIES

1900–1930

THESE thirty years of transition have been a period of steady expansion and development, of very remarkable progress. With ever-increasing earnestness the problems within the Church and outside it have been faced, and, with the limited means available, everything possible has been done towards the solution of these problems.



C.M.S. NIGERIA MISSIONS TO-DAY

The three straight lines divide the three areas: (1) To left: the Yoruba Mission. (2) To right: the Niger Mission. (3) To the north: Northern Nigeria Mission. The first and third together form the Lagos Diocese.

The Expansion of the Church

Geographically, the work in Nigeria falls into three clearly defined sections : (1) the Niger itself with the country to the east and west of it ; (2) Lagos and its hinterland, including the Egba, Yoruba, Ijebu, and Ijesha Countries ; (3) Northern Nigeria. With all these areas the readers of the preceding chapters are now familiar. We must survey them one by one.

I. The Diocese of the Niger is Crowther's old diocese, greatly extended and developed. We have already seen how, after the troubles of the early 'nineties, the churches of the delta elected to form themselves into a semi-independent "Delta Pastorate," staffed entirely with African clergy, but recognizing the authority of the bishop. It developed into an archdeaconry, with Archdeacon D. C. Crowther, as its superintendent, and later with Bishop Johnson in episcopal charge.

The work along the river, north of the delta region, was created an archdeaconry by Bishop Tugwell and staffed by both African and European clergy under his own direct supervision. So remarkable was the growth of this section that in 1919 (on the advice of the bishop) it was separated from the Lagos–Yoruba section and constituted a separate diocese. An African assistant bishop, the Rt. Rev. A. W. Howells, was consecrated in the following year to assist Bishop Tugwell, more especially in the supervision of the delta region. In 1920, Bishop Tugwell, after twenty-eight years of magnificent service, resigned, and was succeeded

by the present bishop, the Rt. Rev. Bertram Lasbrey, with the title of the "Bishop on the Niger."

Onitsha, the first station of the Niger Mission, is to-day the head-quarters of the diocese. In addition to the residences of the bishop, the secretary (who is also the archdeacon), the treasurer, and the general manager of schools, there is one great church with a regular congregation of 1000 Ibo Christians, two smaller ones, and a fourth for non-Ibos, the Dennis Memorial Grammar School, large elementary schools, and a bookshop. The visitor is at once impressed by the very prominent position the mission holds in the town. As the population is not much more than 16,000, it is possible to exert a greater influence than in some of the much larger towns of the Yoruba Country. Five miles to the east, at Iyi Enu, on the main road along the river, is the mission hospital, the ninety beds of which usually accommodate between 700 and 800 patients each year, there being in addition some 20,000 out-patient treatments. The hospital is staffed almost entirely by women, European and African, and a great deal of its activity consists of maternity and child-welfare work. Five miles beyond the hospital is the St. Monica's School for girls, with about 170 boarders. All these things combine to make Onitsha a really strong base for the Mission.

About twenty miles east of Onitsha, on the great main road marked out with telegraph poles and wires, is the country town of Awka. This also is an

important mission station, one of the most important of all, for it includes the training college for the whole diocese. This modern "school of the prophets" stands on the very spot that thirty years ago was "bad bush," *i.e.* a sacred fetish grove where the unholy rites were performed and where the bodies of twin babies and human sacrifices were thrown. It is a thoroughly well equipped institution, with a staff of three English and two African graduates and an African deacon. There are usually about ninety students in residence, training as ordinands, catechists, and teachers. At Awka there is also a girls' compound, a school for training the older girls for the duties of life as wives and mothers in African homes.

Forty miles north-east of Awka is the town of Enugu, on the railway, destined to become a place of considerable importance, for it is now the seat of government for Southern Nigeria, the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor. Such a place presents fine opportunities for work among the growing European population as well as among Africans. Two miles from the capital, at Enugwu-Ng'wo, there is a most interesting station in charge of an African clergyman, the Rev. Isaac Ejindu. From here, in the heart of what used to be a cannibal country, with a population practically unclothed, he superintends with the assistance of two other African clergy a district with no less than seventy churches. At the head-quarters there is another girls' compound, a boys' farm with apprentice

work (again on what was once " bad bush "), a carpentering school, and a " twinnery."

The last-mentioned is the most interesting of all, for it is an experiment for meeting the old but ever-present trouble arising from the superstitious fear of twins so prevalent in this region, and still persisting in spite of the efforts of Government to overcome it. The old custom in this locality was to put twin babies into big clay pots and throw them into the bush, and it is probable that a considerable number of little ones still perish, not because their parents lack human affection for their offspring, but because it is eclipsed by sheer terror of the evil they believe to have come upon them. At Enugwu-Ng'wo efforts are made to persuade the mothers to bring their twins to the twinnery and stay there to feed them. Motherless and deformed babies are also welcomed. It is a novel experiment, full of hope for the future and capable of development here and elsewhere.

Fifty miles south of Onitsha, in the Owerri Province, is another very important station at Ebu Owerri. So recently as 1905 a government medical officer (Dr. Stewart) was murdered in the market place of a neighbouring town in the presence of hundreds of people, and his bicycle was broken and tied to a tree to prevent it running away.[1] It was a year later that Archdeacon Dennis went to the

[1] Recently Bishop Lasbrey dedicated a beautiful church erected by the people who, in their ignorance, murdered Dr. Stewart.

THE PRESENT CHURCH
AT NKWERRI, SOUTHERN NIGERIA

Photograph by the Rev. A. W. Banfield

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN AT THE
" TWINNERY," ENUGWU-NG'WO

Photograph by the Rev. A. W. Banfield

Owerri district as the first Christian missionary to settle there. A piece of " bad bush " was assigned to him at Ebu Owerri, and a little mud house was built upon it. To-day a large church stands on that spot, with an average Sunday congregation of about 750 people. Beside it, there is a school with 500 children, clean and neatly dressed, and taught by a staff of trained Ibo schoolmasters.

But the outstanding feature at Ebu Owerri is specialized work for women and girls, carried on by women missionaries, while African clergy look after the general, pastoral, and evangelistic work. The women's work centres round two compounds, one for unmarried girls and one for married women. The former is really a school for training brides ; its pupils are betrothed girls who are too old for the village schools and come here to receive such instruction as will fit them for matrimony. Young Christian men send their fiancees to this school and pay for their food.

One of the problems of the Mission is that in many places in Nigeria the education of girls has not kept pace with that of boys, and as a result many of the catechists and teachers have to marry uneducated girls. This " school for brides " is an attempt to solve the problem, for one locality at any rate. All the girls, if qualified, receive baptism before they leave (if indeed they were not baptized before they came), and they marry immediately on leaving. The women's compound does a similar work for women who are already married. Christian

husbands who have been married for several years and desire to have their wives instructed, can send them to this school. Usually the wife brings her baby and an older child to look after it while she is in class. Most of these women are unbaptized when they come to the school, for the general rule throughout Nigeria, "under ordinary circumstances," is not to baptize until the candidate can read. The women are baptized before they leave; and in a special service their marriage is blessed, and thus raised to the level of a Christian marriage, the parties promising that it shall be life-long and exclusive. In the country around Ebu Owerri there are a hundred churches in various stages of development. Twenty-five years ago there was not a single church or African Christian in that area.

The work at all these stations, and the numerous out-stations, is among the Ibo people and is carried on mainly in the Ibo language or in English.

The work of the diocese is not confined to the east side of the Niger. As early as 1875 a beginning was made at Asaba, on the west of the river, nearly opposite Onitsha, and since then stations have been opened at Ogwashi-Uku and other places in the Benin Province.

More arresting, however, is a work that began a few years ago a little further south, in the Isoko district. Somewhere about 1916, while the great European war was at its height, the Isoko tribe began to stretch out their hands to God. Perhaps scarcely knowing what they were asking for, they

pled for light, asked that a teacher might be given to them to tell them about the great God in Whose existence every African firmly believes. Such appeals are so frequent in West Africa that it is not always possible to respond. But in this instance the call seemed so unmistakable that an experienced missionary was sent, and the people flocked from every quarter to hear his message.

In a few years a hundred towns and villages in the Isoko Country had built churches, and a score of young men were being trained as evangelists and teachers. The opportunity was so promising that a second missionary was stationed there, for the work was too great for one man. Bishop Lasbrey wrote : " Day after day, week after week, men and women crowded into the churches and besieged the gospel messengers with requests for advice and teaching, for more light." But the senior man broke down and had to retire, and a few days later his colleague died of blackwater fever. Two more men were sent, one of them died in 1927, also of blackwater fever, and five months later the other had to be invalided home. The future of the work hung in the balance, for it seemed impossible to carry on in a mass movement area with only one missionary and one African clergyman. In his plea for reinforcements the bishop wrote :—

During the last ten years (and more especially the last seven) a great mass movement has taken place in the Isoko Country. There are now in the comparatively small area, 104 churches, many of them very large ones. Two churches alone have over 2600 regular adherents, and the total is about 20,000. At Ozora, at morning and

evening prayers, every day in the week, there is an average of 900 attending, and more on Sundays. Aviara the same, and up to 1500 on Sundays. Uzere nearly as many ; and other churches have very large attendances. Yet the whole missionary strength is one man at home invalided. When a missionary goes round, he is literally besieged morning, noon, and night. In order that he may get his meals, it is not infrequently necessary to get some people to make a sort of cordon round the house to keep the folk off for a while.

The Isoko Country differs completely from the surrounding countries, in tribe, language, and everything. No other society is at work in it. For a while the situation was really critical, and it was a question whether from sheer lack of workers the C.M.S. would be compelled to abandon it, which at that juncture might have meant the people relapsing into gross heathenism. Happily, after a time the one missionary was able to return, and in 1929 two more men joined him. Great was the joy when, in the spring of 1930, the first two women missionaries arrived. They were met some miles from the village and escorted by hundreds of African Christians with drums and bells and decorations. Medical and social welfare work was at once undertaken, and African girls are being trained as nurses and midwives.

This is an opportunity of unusual promise, but such a mass movement creates all those problems we have referred to in previous chapters. Without effective oversight and thorough training there is sure to be disaster. We rejoice over it with trembling ; but if proper pastoral, educational, and training work can be undertaken and maintained on a sufficiently

wide scale, it may yet prove one of the most glorious chapters in the history of the Niger Mission.

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Among the numerous creeks and waterways of the Niger delta is the other archdeaconry of the diocese, that known as the Delta Pastorate. This also has made considerable progress. It has its centre at Port Harcourt, Archdeacon Crowther's head-quarters. The mention of that veteran's name compels us to pause for a moment to pay tribute to the long and distinguished services he has rendered to the Kingdom of God. In previous chapters we have seen him as a boy accompanying his father, as a young clergyman taking responsibilities, and in his mature years leading and guiding the churches of the Delta Pastorate. It is just sixty years since his father ordained him. To-day, an aged man full of honour, and "venerable" in the highest sense of the word, he is still in full work and devoted to the cause in which his whole life has been spent.

Archdeacon Crowther has seen the work in the delta region grow, from the first mud-and-thatch church at Bonny, until to-day it comprises eleven districts, with an average of nearly sixty churches in each, and all self-supporting. Unfortunately these districts are understaffed, some having no resident clergyman, which inevitably is a source of danger. There is no C.M.S. European missionary stationed in this area, except at Port Harcourt, where an Englishman has charge of the book depot and does a measure of prison and leper work.

The progress of the Delta Pastorate may be seen in a notable event at the beginning of 1929, when Bishop Howells dedicated a magnificent new church at Okrika, on a small island in the river not far from Port Harcourt. In preaching the dedication sermon, Archdeacon Crowther recalled the time when he first went to Okrika and found it dominated by a great juju house which rose far above all the other buildings. It was a place feared by strangers because of the deeds of darkness with which it was associated. To-day the juju house has gone and the new church, which seats 1500 people, has taken its place as the most prominent building in the town. The principal chief, instead of presiding over the old heathen rites, was interpreting the Archdeacon's sermon. It was a great occasion, and Christians gathered from near and far. For three days before the ceremony, from forty to fifty canoe loads of visitors arrived. Never before had there been so many people gathered there, or with so much rejoicing. For the dedication service, it was estimated that at least 2000 people were packed inside the church, and there were quite as many outside, unable to squeeze in. The church was entirely paid for by the people, without outside aid. On the following day, Bishop Lasbrey conducted in the new church the biggest ordination service ever known in the diocese. Ten men were admitted to deacon's and four to priest's orders.

The chief weakness of the Delta Pastorate is the very inadequate provision for training. There is

an institution at Ihie for the training of catechists, under an African principal, but it only accommodates thirty, and needs to be enlarged and strengthened if it is to meet the needs of the situation. The candidates for ordination go to Awka College for training.

After nearly forty years of separate and independent existence, the Delta Pastorate is now organically joined to the C.M.S. portion of the diocese. Under a new constitution, the two archdeaconries are welded together in one synod that has authority over both. This is a healing of the old wounds of those dark days in the 'nineties, which is a cause for devout thankfulness. Both sections of the diocese stand to benefit by the drawing together. Co-operation and the pooling of experience must inevitably be for the greater good of the whole.

The following statistical table will give some idea of the growth of the Niger Diocese in the thirty years:—

	1900	1930
Missionaries (including wives)	31	41
African clergy	12	40
African lay workers, including women	*about* 100	1541
Stations	13	26
Out-stations		1131
Organized congregations		1194
Communicants	313	13,852
Baptized adherents	1231	66,218
Catechumens	509	58,829
Total adherents	1740	125,047
Adults baptized during year	97	4300
Children „ „ „	26	2061
Schools and colleges	20	567
Scholars and students	721	34,149

II. The Lagos Diocese has made similar progress, first under Bishop Tugwell, and, since the separation from the Niger Diocese in 1919, under the present bishop, the Rt. Rev. F. Melville Jones, who previous to his consecration had spent twenty-six years in the Yoruba Country, chiefly as principal of St. Andrew's College at Oyo.

Lagos, the most important port in British West Africa, is the head-quarters of the diocese. Its population is considerably over 100,000, which works out at 4414 persons to the square mile. Less than 1200 of the inhabitants are Europeans. In such a town the C.M.S. naturally occupies a most important position, having a number of churches, schools, and other institutions.

Most important of all is the cathedral which stands in a prominent position on the Marina. For many years known as Christ Church, it is now being reconstructed, and has already been extended by the erection of a large and beautiful choir, so that it may be worthy to be the cathedral of the diocese. The foundation stone was laid by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales in 1925, and the enlarged building was consecrated in June, 1929, by Bishop Melville Jones and his assistant bishops, the Rt. Rev. Isaac Oluwole, and the Rt. Rev. A. W. Smith. It is intended to rebuild the nave on a scale to correspond with the choir, and when the scheme is completed the Lagos Cathedral will unquestionably be the finest church in West Africa. It is fitting, and not a little significant, that it has been designed by an

African architect and built by African contractors. Within, its most conspicuous feature is the east window, a memorial to Samuel Adjai Crowther, slave, pioneer missionary, and bishop. Practically every part of the diocese took part in the erection of the cathedral ; tens of thousands of African Christians contributed to it in one way or another, and communities or individual donors have given the furniture and fittings. It was opened and consecrated to the service of God with overflowing joy and highest expectation as to its value as the spiritual centre of the diocese.

But notable as the cathedral is, it is only one feature of C.M.S. work in Lagos. An English church for the use of Europeans is in charge of a chaplain. The Grammar School was founded in 1859 and has now some 450 pupils. Many of the leading men of Lagos received their education in it. The girls' school, founded in 1869, has about 300 scholars. One of the most remarkable features of all is the great bookshop that provides literature of all kinds for all branches and departments of the work. The head depot is one of the largest shops in Lagos, dealing in every kind of literature and general stationery, and it has seventeen branch depots spread over the diocese. It is essentially a piece of missionary work, carried out on strictly business lines, under the direction of a lay missionary, Mr. C. W. Wakeman, who has given twenty-five years to the work. All the profits of the bookshop are devoted to the Mission.

While dealing with Lagos, we cannot omit mention of one devoted leader who resides there, the aged assistant bishop, Isaac Oluwole. Ordained in 1881, and consecrated assistant to Bishop Hill in 1893, he has rendered noble and most distinguished service, and now in old age he is loved and honoured by all.

Travelling into the interior by the railway, we find the country dotted over with C.M.S. stations and outposts. The oldest of these, Abeokuta and Ibadan, we have dealt with at length in previous chapters, and from them the work has spread far and wide. Between the years 1915 and 1918 important new extensions were made, *e.g.*, Evbiobe (Benin Province) in 1915; Benin city, 1917; Ilorin, 1917; and Warri, 1918. The last named acts as a link with the Niger Diocese. Abeokuta and Ibadan are strongholds of the Church, and so are many smaller towns. In the Egba and Yoruba Countries all the churches are under the pastoral care of African clergy and lay workers, and all the European missionaries are set apart for special work.

As a mission centre, Oyo, the capital of the Alafin, who is nominally "King of all the Yorubas," is second only to Lagos in importance, for it is the training centre for the diocese. St. Andrew's College, founded in 1896 by the Rev. F. Melville Jones (as he then was), and directed by him until his elevation to the bishopric twenty-three years later, is by far the most important institution in the whole diocese. Under the principalship of Archdeacon

Burton, it has made rapid progress and has now a staff of six Europeans (four of whom are graduates) and thirteen Africans (two of them graduates). The students in residence usually number nearly 180: ordinands, 11; catechists, 12; normal, 155. The normal students take a four years' course. The ordinands are at Melville Hall, a new building erected in the spacious compound a few years ago and called after Bishop Melville Jones, the founder. The men come for training from all parts of the Yoruba Country, and even from places as distant as Benin and Lokoja. Quite recently there were 132 candidates for thirty vacancies. The value of such an institution is inestimable.

The other special educational institutions in the diocese include boys' grammar schools at Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ijebu Ode, and Ondo, and the girls' school at Ibadan with two women missionaries in charge; a diocesan girls' school at Ijebu Ode in the Ijebu Country; and a girls' training class at Akure, in the Ondo Province. The last mentioned is doing a very useful work for girls who want a thoroughly practical and chiefly non-literary education. Two European women are in charge, and it is the centre for girls' work in the whole Yoruba Country. Girls come long distances for training. Such subjects as weaving, gardening, and farming are included in the curriculum. In connexion with it, a nursery school has been started with the double purpose of saving babies' lives and of training girls in all that pertains to mothercraft.

An experiment was made lately in holding a training school for mothers. They gathered at Oyo for five days. A distinguished African medical man, Dr. Oluwole (son of Bishop Oluwole) gave health lectures, and several women missionaries also took part. It was so successful that it clearly points to possibilities of new usefulness that should be developed as soon as possible. It would be much easier to do such work in an area like Onitsha, where women medical missionaries are available to take charge of it and give the lectures. Unfortunately the C.M.S. has no medical station in the Yoruba Country. A women's guild is very strong and is serving a most useful purpose. In connexion with it a women's central conference is held every year, at which instruction is given in matters of health and personal and social hygiene. The women themselves take part in the conference, and get up quite freely to ask questions or to express their views on the problems under discussion.

The extent and growth of the Lagos Diocese south of the Niger will be seen from the following table :—

	1900	1930
Missionaries, including wives	26	52
African clergy	21	76
African lay workers, including women	46	1416
Stations	17	91
Out-stations		911
Organized congregations		376
Communicants	1013	31,262
Baptized adherents	2449	109,345
Catechumens	732	25,916
Total adherents	3181	135,261

	1900	1930
Adults baptized during year	110	8838
Children „ „ „	90	3898
Schools and colleges	21	364
Scholars and students	1068	22,448

III. Northern Nigeria, although included in the Lagos Diocese is in every way a field apart. The conditions are so entirely different from those obtaining in Southern Nigeria, that it demands separate treatment here.

From the days of Graham Wilmot Brooke, Lokoja was the base for advance, and after Bishop Tugwell's party was compelled to fall back on Loko, Lokoja once more became the head-quarters with Loko as an advanced post. Then, in 1903, when Sir Frederick Lugard had overthrown the Fula power, Bishop Tugwell once more moved towards his goal, and succeeded in planting a station at Bida. Foothold was thus secured at two points north of the rivers. The situation might be compared to the strategic deployment of an army ; with its base at Lokoja, where Niger and Benué meet ; its right wing at Loko, a hundred miles up the Benué ; and its left wing at Bida, 130 miles up the Niger. It was possible to advance on Hausaland from either point, should the way open.

In 1905 the opportunity presented itself ; Dr. Miller, advancing from Loko, reached Zaria once more and obtained a foothold. The old emir had gone, but there were many people in Zaria, both Hausa and Fulani, who remembered Dr. Miller as

a member of Bishop Tugwell's party, and his medical skill secured him a welcome. A small hospital and dispensary were opened within the walls of the city; but at first the people did not rush into them. Moslem suspicion and love of old ways are so great that the first patients "had to be sought in the by-ways and hedges, and won at a price." Dr. Miller himself pushed two of the first in-patients on his bicycle for seven miles. But love and medical skill triumphed; the hospital steadily won the confidence of the people; a boys' school was opened, and for sixteen years Zaria was the solitary mission base in Hausaland.

In the Hausa States a trouble of quite a new type has had to be faced. The British Government of the new protectorate of Northern Nigeria had made to both the Hausa peoples and their Fulani rulers a promise that there should be no interference with their religion, a promise both wise and just, and one that all true missionary workers would heartily endorse. Yet we firmly believe and stoutly maintain that a wisely-conducted evangelism is no breach of this promise, and that is just where government officials and the missionary leaders have not been able to see eye to eye. In all fairness, we must strive to see the government point of view. Knowing well the intolerant and inflammable temperament of Moslem peoples, it was only natural that they should desire to carry on, among the newly-conquered emirates, the good work of pacification and reform unhindered by an outbreak of

Moslem fanaticism ; and it is not difficult to understand that they feared that missionary effort might stir up bitterness and possibly lead to serious trouble. We may not agree with this attitude, but we are bound to recognize the difficulty the Government had to face.

Forbidden to advance into the Moslem emirates, the missionaries turned their eyes elsewhere. To the south, between Zaria and the rivers, a great pagan belt stretches across the Sudan, and in this the Government freely gave permission to work. About 1904 there was formed in Cambridge as a result of study bands organized by the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, the "Cambridge University Mission Party." Its members were eager to go to some hitherto untouched region.

The original idea was that some of the party should go out to Africa, while those members who remained at home supported them. But it was ultimately decided that they should affiliate with the C.M.S. The pagan belt of the Central Sudan was chosen as the field of their labours, and in 1907 they started a mission in what is known as the Bauchi Plateau, about 140 miles north-east of Loko. Two stations were opened, one at Panyam (in 1907) among the Sura tribe, and the other at Kabwir (in 1910) among the Angass. These two tribes were brave and independent spirited, but very primitive, both men and women being practically naked. The type of people may be gathered from

the fact that when, in 1918, Bishop Oluwole went to conduct a confirmation among them, the twenty candidates appeared before him, the men entirely unclothed and the women with only a girdle of leaves, yet quite unconcerned thereby. For some years the C.M.S. had maintained a small staff of European and African workers in this mission, and not without success. But the financial strain in recent years, and the necessity for retrenchment, has led to the handing over the work on the Bauchi Plateau to the Sudan United Mission that has considerable work in adjacent areas. The S.U.M. is endeavouring to avoid any breach in the continuity of the work, and has staffed the mission with Anglican missionaries.

While the right wing of advance was being developed in the Bauchi Province, the left wing was also being strengthened around Bida in the Nupé Province. In 1909 a station was opened at Katcha, on a branch railway then being constructed from the Niger to Kano. Ten years later another station was opened at Kutigi ; and in 1925 yet another at Kataeregi, still further up the railway. All these are in a country that up to thirty years ago was constantly devastated by slave raids carried out on a large scale by the Emirs of Bida and Kontagora.

The opening of the railway to Kano in 1912 materially altered the situation in the Hausa States. Around the railhead a small colony of Europeans sprang up, official, military, and commercial. The

opening of the Kano emirate to trade also brought up the line large numbers of African traders, chiefly Yorubas, Ibos, Sierra Leonians, and Lagos people; and for these the Sabon Gari (or new town) came into existence, a quarter of a mile from the European reservation, no "foreigners" (African or European) being allowed to reside within the walls of Kano. Many of these African traders were Christians, connected with the C.M.S., and in course of time Government permitted an African clergyman to be stationed there to build a church in the Sabon Gari and minister to them. That was the first Christian foothold obtained in the Kano emirate, so long the goal of missionary effort. In 1924 a more substantial church was opened, and it serves for the different communities, united in their Christian faith but divided by language. The programme of the ordinary Sunday services is this :—

8.30. For Sierra Leonians (in English).
10.30. For Yorubas.
12.30. For Ibos.
2.0. Sunday school with classes in all three languages.
3.30. For Yorubas.
5.0. For Hausas.
6.30. For Sierra Leonians (in English).

This work is not really "missionary," but is rather with a view to ministering to the immigrant African Christians who live in the Sabon Gari.

The next forward step was taken soon after the close of the great European war. The C.M.S. applied for permission to open a book depot in the

European reservation at Kano station. Government granted permission and gave an excellent site on the edge of the great open-air market on the " no man's land " between the reservation and the Sabon Gari. So in 1921 the book depot was opened, with the Rev. and Mrs. J. F. Cotton in charge and a Hausa Christian as head clerk. This man, whose father was one of the Emir of Zaria's councillors, had been converted in Dr. Miller's school at Zaria, and baptized by the name of David. As Hausas, David and his wife were able to secure a house in Kano city, and for some years were the only Christians known to be living within the walls.

The book depot soon proved a great success, selling books and stationery not only to people in the Sabon Gari and the European reservation but in ever-increasing quantities to Hausas. The Sabon Gari market, with its wonderful collection of booths and stalls of every description, and a strange medley of camels, donkeys, and load-oxen, was an excellent place for selling Christian literature, especially gospels, and people who came with the caravans took them back to their distant homes. No one was more anxious than Mr. Cotton to avoid anything that could provoke fanaticism. His mission was essentially one of friendship and goodwill, not of religious controversy, and he soon discovered that he was received as a friend by the Hausa people.

Hausa men, and even women and children, from the city came freely to the book depot to buy Hausa gospels and other literature, and to ask questions

about Christianity. Some who were interested came readily to a little homely service held specially for them in a room on the compound, and later to a service for Hausas held on Sundays at the church. It was quite evident that several of them were turning their faces Christwards, and eventually they asked for baptism. On one memorable day, in a bathing pool just outside one of the city gates, in the presence of fully 2000 Moslems and others, Mr. Cotton baptized the first band of seven Hausa converts from Kano, men and women. The full baptismal service was used, and David and Dauda (another Hausa worker) preached clearly the message of Christ. There was absolutely no hostility of any kind manifest in that great crowd of listeners. Since then, other similar baptismal services have been held at the same spot. Regular services were held at the Court House for Europeans, until it should be possible to build a church for them.

At Zaria, where for so long Dr. Miller bravely held on alone, the work has developed. During the last few years younger men (one of them, and the wife of another, being doctors), and three women missionaries have joined the staff. In addition to the boys' school opened by Dr. Miller, a hostel for girls has done good service. All the C.M.S. work has been transferred to a new and more spacious site outside the town, and a hospital has been built.

With the development of work in Northern Nigeria, the Lagos Diocese was again becoming too large for effective oversight by Bishop Melville

Jones and his African assistant, Bishop Oluwole. So in 1925, Archdeacon A. W. Smith, who for twenty-three years had been working in the diocese, was consecrated as assistant bishop, with special care of the work in Northern Nigeria. He resides at Ilorin, and travels widely over the great area for which he is responsible.

The prohibition of missionary work in the Moslem areas has never been removed. There has been no hostility on the part of the Moslems, but Government has always been afraid lest trouble may arise. We believe that there is no real ground for such fears, and that wisely-directed missionary efforts would strengthen rather than retard the interests that Government have at heart. Not a few of the highest officials are Christian men and more or less in sympathy with missionary effort, but there are a few who are distrustful or even avowedly antagonistic.

The Development of the Church

Having traced the expansion of the work during the last thirty years, we have now to think of the internal development of the African churches and their progress towards self-support and self-government, for no church can be deemed entirely satisfactory that does not learn to stand upon its own feet and to rely upon its own resources.

There is comparatively little poverty in West Africa, and hardly anything that can be called destitution. In this it differs from India or China,

where literally millions of people live from year to year perpetually below the hunger line. Nature is bountiful to West Africa ; the rains never fail completely, and famine is practically unknown. The very poorest villagers have food enough and to spare. Under normal conditions there is work for all, and all are able to provide for the simple needs of their families. The Nigerian people are born traders, the women as well as the men. Hundreds of thousands of women grow their produce on their farms (allotments, we should call them) and sell it at their own pitch or booth in the market. The coming of the white man with his commerce, his railways, his roads, and his motor transport, has stimulated trade, and large numbers of African villagers are busily developing their own native resources in a way they never thought of doing before. People who aforetime were content merely to provide for their actual needs, are now eagerly "making money." The policy of Government is not to give or sell land to white planters, but to encourage the Africans to develop it themselves and for their own benefit. The country has more than doubled its revenue in ten years.

All this means that the tribes and villages are self-supporting communities, and when they become Christians they are able to meet whatever cost their new worship entails. They always build their own churches, simple mud and thatch ones at first, and more durable ones later, when the increased number of Christians makes it possible to incur greater

expense. Usually the Christian villagers pay their own catechist or teacher and maintain the school, and also take their collections in church for the maintenance of their simple worship. Formerly they made offerings to the old gods and spirits ; now they bring love gifts and thankofferings to their new-found Lord. In the larger churches the expenses both of building and maintenance are necessarily greater, and as a rule the income increases proportionately, the congregation meet the salary of their African clergyman and whatever other expenses there may be, even though this may be difficult for them. In places like Lagos, Abeokuta, Bonny, Port Harcourt, and Onitsha, there are large churches, with big pipe organs and every accessory for worship, and sometimes even electric light ; all these things are provided by the gifts of the African Christians, aided in some instances by gifts from special friends at home, but involving no cost to the missionary society.

It is the policy of the C.M.S. to pay the salaries, passages, and furlough allowances of its European missionaries, and provide for the building and upkeep of their houses ; it also makes, where necessary, larger or smaller grants towards the cost of training institutions, hospitals, and other special agencies. Beyond this, the African churches are self-supporting. Nor is this all ; most of the churches contribute also to central funds, and take up regular offerings for distinctly missionary work in their own or other lands.

Great strides have also been made in the direction of self-government, for the policy is to train the Africans to bear the administrative as well as the financial burdens of their Church. The presence of two African assistant bishops and usually two African archdeacons, as well as over 100 African clergy (as compared with twenty-two European clergy) is evidence of this. Moreover, Lagos was the first diocese in West Africa to have a diocesan synod, and it is still more significant that upon it African clergy and laity very largely outnumber the Europeans. In 1930 a similar synod and church constitution was created in the Niger Diocese.

In such areas as Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Oshogbo-Oyo, Ilesha-Ife, and Ondo, the pastoral and evangelistic work is entirely in the hands of African clergy acting under district councils appointed for each area, a very remarkable experiment in devolution. White missionaries are more and more being set apart for purely institutional work, leaving the pastoral responsibilities to Africans. We have seen how, in the Niger Diocese, the Delta Pastorate has been autonomous for nearly forty years, and now district councils (similar to those in the Lagos Diocese) are to be found throughout the archdeaconry of Onitsha.

The Spiritual Life of the Church

Self-support and self-government, important as they are, are by no means the only tests for the health and prosperity of a church. The spiritual

and moral condition is even more important and in some cases causes no little anxiety. There is a considerable nucleus of people who are strongly, intensely, and devotedly attached to the Church, a people of whom we may well be proud. Beyond these there is a wider circle of faithful, and on the whole loyal people, who are more or less regular in their observance of religious duties. Beyond these again there is another circle of those whose attachment is of a very loose kind, and who are easily carried away.

The greatest problem everywhere is not so much the evangelizing of the heathen as the instruction of the multitudes who are already within the fold of the Church and the deepening of their spiritual and moral life. This is especially so in the newer churches and particularly where there are mass movements. Take, for example, the Isoko Country. The old heathenism is in the very blood of those who have responded to the call of Christ ; their instincts, habits, manner of life, and " way of looking at things," are the result of centuries of fetishism. They are perfectly sincere in their Christian profession, and so earnest that not infrequently they go triumphantly through a storm of persecution, in some cases life itself being in jeopardy ; but it takes them long to understand the moral implications and spiritual requirement of their new faith. West African native religion is entirely a matter of external ceremonies, and it is not easy to lead converts to see that Christianity is a religion of the heart

and inner life. Many of the demands of Christianity are new to them, and very puzzling. The old tribal laws and customs and taboos are ingrained in their very nature, and they do not find it easy to adapt themselves to a new rule of life. Just as Abraham, in obedience to the call of God, left his old home-land and kindred, yet in the new land of promise still followed the laws he had known from child-hood in Ur of the Chaldees (*e.g.*, in the matter of taking Hagar and his subsequent treatment of her), so the new West African convert to-day quite naturally inclines to bring his old tribal customs into the Church, especially (as with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) in the matter of marriage and sex relationship.

It is almost impossible for us, with centuries of Christian teaching and influence behind us, mentally to put ourselves in the place of people newly converted from raw paganism. Nor can we reasonably expect from them the spiritual knowledge and standard we look for in Great Britain. Missionaries in the field are constantly reminded of Myers' lines:—

> Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,
> All is accomplished and the work is done.

Even in the older and established churches there is often a disappointingly low spiritual life (and is it not so with hundreds of our home churches too ?). Everything possible is done to meet the situation, by the conducting of the regular means of grace, and also by teaching and special efforts. A good

example of this is found in the girls' guild in the Yoruba Country. It aims at getting the Christian girls together weekly for Bible reading and prayer, all the members having Scripture Union cards for daily reading. In order to stimulate healthy recreation in place of the old dances, needlework and games are run side by side with the worship and instruction. In the local churches, the wives of the catechists, teachers, or clergy take charge of the guild, and one missionary devotes all her time to organizing and developing it, visiting village after village to train the workers and to meet the girls. Annual conferences are held, to which the members of the guild come from many miles around. It is becoming a very useful factor in developing the spiritual life of the Church, and a similar organization has come into existence in the Niger Diocese.

Special missions have proved a great help, and the occasional visit of a missioner from England has done much to stimulate the life of the Church. In the days to come the arranging of such visits may form an important part of the ministry of the Church in England to the younger Churches in West Africa. One of the big contributions the home Church can make is by occasionally sending out to Nigeria carefully chosen men of spiritual insight and vision who can lead the West African Christians to a deeper life and richer experience of Christ.

XVIII

THE TASK BEFORE US

FEW mission fields in the whole world offer such opportunities for Christian service as Nigeria. That very striking World Call report, *The Call from Africa*,[1] in dealing with the Dioceses of Lagos and the Niger, declares :—

> As missionary dioceses these must be regarded as perhaps the most important in all Africa. . . . Nigeria is about three times the size of Great Britain and Ireland, and contains for Africa the very dense population of at least nineteen millions. This fact alone puts the dioceses of Nigeria in a class of their own. But there are other reasons. The potentialities of the country are enormous, and its development under British rule can only be compared with that of the Gold Coast.

It is often said that tropical Africa is a land of villages, and it may be added that in most parts of the continent these villages are far apart. Nigeria differs from all other parts in that it has also many large native towns. These towns do not owe their origin or present size to the white man. In the Yoruba Country several towns have populations of 30,000, 40,000, and 50,000, while Abeokuta has 100,000, and Ibadan 250,000, the largest town in tropical Africa. Taking Southern Nigeria as a

[1] Published in 1926 by the Missionary Council of the Church Assembly.

THE LANGUAGE AREAS OF THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES

whole, the 1921 census returns[1] show that there are :—

187	towns	with	a	population	of from	5,000 to 10,000 each.
84	„	„	„	„	„	10,000 to 20,000 „
19	„	„	„	„	„	20,000 to 50,000 „

Southern Nigeria is the most densely populated region of all tropical Africa ; the province of Owerri having an average of 200 to 300, and that of Onitsha 300 to 400 persons to the square mile, which for Africa is very high indeed, and equal to many parts of India. Northern Nigeria, too, is a land of walled cities with very large populations.

Fortunately this great territory is well covered by

[1] The census returns are in many instances notoriously *under* the mark, owing largely to the African's superstitious reluctance to declare the number of his children, and also to the fear that the census was taken as a basis for taxation.

the missionary societies. In addition to the C.M.S.[1] the Wesleyans and the American Baptists are very strong in the Yoruba Country and Lagos, and the Salvation Army is represented in Lagos Colony. In the delta region, to the east of the C.M.S. areas, the Primitive Methodists have a number of stations, and the United Free Church of Scotland have developed an important work, mainly in Calabar, well known as the sphere where Mary Slessor laboured so nobly for God. The Qua Ibo Mission has work in Calabar and Owerri. In Northern Nigeria, the Sudan United Mission, the Sudan Interior Mission, the Mennonite Brethren, the Dutch Reformed, and the Seventh Day Adventists have work in the pagan belt. Happily there is a great deal of fellowship and co-operation between the missions, especially the larger ones, and in 1930 a United Christian Council of Nigeria was formed to deal with common problems and co-ordinate the work in every way possible. The main part of the country is fairly well covered, and save in the four great northern provinces of Sokoto, Kano, Zaria, and Bornu, there is not much room for expansion except by developing the untouched villages and towns around existing mission stations ; for this, of course, there is ample scope. Only the remote districts of Sokoto and Bornu remain untouched. As compared with other mission fields,

[1] We may perhaps be permitted to say, in no spirit of boasting, but merely stating a simple fact, that in Nigeria the work of the C.M.S. is carried on on a larger scale, and is far more widely spread, than that of any other society.

there is strangely little being attempted in the way of medical work, although the need is tremendous. The C.M.S has only two hospitals, Zaria, and Iyi Enu near Onitsha.

The missionary forces are exceedingly well placed for bringing their influence to bear upon the people. Almost all the really strategic positions are occupied

SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE NORTHERN PROVINCES

by one or other of the societies. Both the western and eastern railways, together with their branch lines, are dotted along with mission stations, and the same is true of the Niger and the Benué, and the numerous creeks and rivers of the delta. But the fact remains that the total number of European and African clergy, ministers, lay and women workers, is wholly inadequate for such a tremendous task. In

many areas, the subordinate workers of all the missions are still left with far too little oversight, and the dangers we have dealt with in a previous chapter still obtain. There is an almost overwhelming need for more missionaries and well-trained African clergy.

The risk to health for Europeans is no longer so great as formerly. Tropical diseases have been the subject of expert study and to-day the sources of disease and sickness are well understood ; the safeguards to health are observed, and during the last thirty years there have been comparatively few deaths among missionaries. In this, every white man who goes to West Africa owes a great debt of gratitude to the memory of the late Joseph Chamberlain, who, in the dark 'nineties, as Colonial Secretary, called in the aid of science. By the Malaria Commission, it was definitely proved that malaria is spread only by means of the bite of a certain mosquito and yellow fever by another. The mosquito curtain and daily doses of quinine have come into regular use, and other precautions have greatly reduced the number of victims to blackwater fever, dysentery, and typhoid. West Africa is not yet a health resort, and is not likely to be so in the near future ; but with due precautions and frequent furloughs it is no longer regarded as unsafe to go to West Africa. The C.M.S. has a notable list of long service missionaries in Nigeria. Of the present missionaries, Mrs. Melville Jones (wife of the Bishop of Lagos) has completed forty-one years of service, and the bishop himself thirty-seven;

ten others have given over thirty years, and a dozen more have served terms of from twenty to thirty years in the country. Truly a notable list, and half of these long-service workers are women, showing that women can stand the climate as well as men.

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It is well that we should remind ourselves that the Churches are not the only forces working for the uplift of Nigeria. All those factors and influences that are summed up in the one potent word "Government" are working mightily to the same end. In our enthusiasm for missionary effort we must not overlook the inestimably valuable work the Government is doing. Many of the men in highest positions are men of high Christian character, and many others who would not call themselves "Christians" except in a general and nominal sense are none the less actuated by a fine sense of duty and responsibility for the people under their care. There are problems that only Government can tackle with any hope of success; but there are others that the Churches are better fitted to deal with, and still others that can best be solved by Government and the Churches working together. More and more the Government recognizes the value of the help the Churches can render, and our policy should be one of co-operation at every possible point.

Take, for example, the slave raiding and slave selling in Northern Nigeria. Let us freely admit that in abolishing these gigantic evils the British

Government has done what missionary societies could not have accomplished. Who was it that finally freed Abeokuta from all fear of Dahomian attack ? It was the French Government, by crushing the powerful Dahomian kingdom. Who made tribal wars in Nigeria to cease and gave the land peace ? It was the Government that issued the fiat : "Let there be peace," and there was peace. We cannot be too thankful for all that Government has accomplished.

Or consider the old pagan customs deeply rooted in the tribal life of the country, human sacrifice and cannibalism. The Government has prohibited such things ; and they have practically disappeared. As to infanticide and the cruel treatment meted out to the mother of twins, the Churches can render most valuable assistance in bringing about the change in public opinion that alone can secure their complete suppression. The Churches can help by creating a new public conscience, by helping the people to realize that these things are fundamentally wrong.

Again, take the liquor traffic, concerning which the Government is of two minds : on the one hand glad to have the revenue that it produces ; and on the other unwilling to see the Africans debauched by spirituous liquor. The matter is rendered the more difficult by the amount of drinking done by certain sections of the white community. Yet any one who has seen part of the population of a bush village drunk in connexion with a funeral ceremony (as occasionally happens) must be distressed beyond

measure that much of the liquor is imported from so-called Christian lands, and that it has become such a staple article of commerce as to have gained the name of "trade" spirits. We have sometimes blushed for shame to see on a pretentious tomb stone outside a remote village an inscription to the effect that at the funeral of the deceased the sum of £150 (or it may be £300) was spent. *One knows too well that almost all of that money was spent in intoxicating liquors!* Drink is a very serious temptation to many of our African Christians, and it has been known to lead to the fall of some catechists and teachers. The bad example of some Europeans is too readily followed by a people naturally imitative. Under the Brussels Convention of 1890–91 the importation of foreign liquors between seventy degrees north and twenty-two degrees south latitude was restricted, *except for use of Europeans*, and the Covenant of the League of Nations set still further restrictions to it. But the traffic, under one pretext or another, continues, and is doing its deadly work. Many people are acquiring a taste for distilled spirits, and it is most difficult to keep them from it. This again, is a matter in which the Churches, by vigorous campaigns, can help by creating a public conscience in favour of temperance.

Or consider the materialism that is rapidly displacing the old religious beliefs and is causing no little anxiety to the Government, for it means the breaking down of old restraints. This is a matter that the Churches alone can deal with;

as the old foundations crumble, they alone can supply that new foundation that is essential to the moral well-being of the people.

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Perhaps most of the problems before the Church in Nigeria may be summed up in the one phrase : " the home life." The home is the pivot of the nation. What the homes are, so is the nation. No nation can rise above the level of its home life. At bed-rock, all the problems of Nigeria are crystallized in the homes of her people.

Try to visualize the typical African home in some up-country village or town scarcely touched by European influence or by Christianity. It consists, not of a single self-contained dwelling, but of a number of dwellings, built more or less regularly round a courtyard or compound, and occupied by several branches of the same family. Really it is more a clan than a family dwelling. The walls are solidly built of mud, and the roof is thatch, or possibly, nowadays, of *pan* (*i.e.* corrugated iron). The rooms are small and dark, and all open into the wide veranda that runs round the compound. Most of the domestic life centres round that compound. There is very little privacy. If it be the compound of a wealthy villager or chief, each of his wives will have one room for herself and her children. There is very little that can be called " family life " in our understanding of the term.

The home is essentially the woman's sphere, though in West Africa not by any means her only

sphere. She has her allotment in the bush, her "stall" in the market, and possibly her trading canoe on the river. Differing in every way from her Indian sister, she is not timid, shy, or dependent. Physically strong and robust, she is self-reliant and of independent spirit, accustomed to fend for herself. She has her rights and privileges and knows how to defend them. She is well able to take care of herself. She works hard, but not beyond her strength. It is very far from the truth to assert that the woman does *all* the work and the man merely smokes and eats. Each have their recognized duties, and the heaviest fall to the man. No one who really knows the African will suggest that he is lazy. Lord Lugard (and no one knows Nigeria better) wrote :—

> It has long been the fashion to speak of the African as naturally lazy, leaving work to his women, and content to lie in the sun and eat and drink. It would seem, however, that there are few races which are more naturally industrious. . . . The labour expended in collecting and preparing for export some £4,000,000 worth of palm produce in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, and of £1,500,000 worth of ground-nuts for the Northern Provinces, must be prodigious. No white man could ever carry so heavy a load, or for so long a distance as he does, without fatigue; and at heavy earth-work with his own implements the African can show good results.

Whatever is said of the men, we have never yet heard the African woman charged with idleness. Her life centres in the compound. There she cooks the meals and rears her children. She loves her children passionately ; when they are ill she is driven by desperate anxiety to make offerings to the

spirits, and her grief is almost uncontrollable if they die. But she has not the remotest idea of training them if they survive. She teaches the girls to do domestic and farm work, or to take part in the family industry, and the boys learn the corresponding duties from their father ; but everything that we mean by the term " train up a child " is quite beyond the ken of African parents.

If that village home be in some part of the country where the fear of twins is still very real, the woman will live in constant terror lest that dreaded calamity should come upon her. Government has prohibited the destruction or abandonment of twins ; but the fear of spirits is stronger than the fear of the far-away Government, stronger even than the Africans' usual love for their offspring, and little lives are still sacrificed to superstitious fear. Some of the Christians have been afraid of being poisoned by their heathen fellow-villagers because they refused to follow their usual custom and were therefore accused of bringing evil upon the whole village.

The central factor in African home life is polygamy. It is deeply woven into the very fabric of family and social life. Though it would be untrue to say that the majority of men have two wives (for the simple reason that there are not enough women for that to be so), yet very large numbers have two or three, and some chiefs and well-to-do men have sixty or seventy wives, or even more. A man's importance is increased by the number of wives he possesses. The average African woman, so far from

objecting to the system, actually prefers to have several co-wives, partly because it enhances the wealth and social standing of her husband (and she therefore feels herself to be the wife of a man of consequence), and partly because it means company and other women to share with her the duties of the house and the farm or trade. She is quite unconscious that the subject has any *moral* aspect. From the man's point of view, the increase of wives means increase of prestige, and if he be a chief, it provides him with a cheap and reliable supply of labour for any work he may have in hand. The subject is an exceedingly difficult one, and any attempt to deal with it by a drastic stroke of law would almost certainly be futile ; or, if successful, would still more certainly produce such an upheaval of the whole social system as would create moral problems vastly more serious than polygamy.

It appears certain that polygamy is not due to any very great disproportion of the number of the sexes. At the last census (1921) the returns for Southern Nigeria were: males, 4,072,000; females, 4,299,000, an excess of only 226,000 females. That is to say, in every hundred of the population there are forty-nine males and fifty-one females. It is true that these figures are not altogether reliable ; but this much at least is certain : there is no overwhelming majority of females, and the relative proportion of the sexes appears to be pretty much the same as in most other lands. There are places where it is impossible for any young men to get a

wife at all, because the older men have too many, a situation that leads to deplorable moral evils. For our present purpose the essential point is that African home life is built upon the polygamous system, and, in spite of all the apologies that can be made for it, there is every reason to believe that it is utterly impossible to establish a healthy, Christian home life upon such a foundation.

Polygamy is one of the most serious problems the Church has to face in West Africa. It prevents thousands of men receiving baptism, for the rule is that no polygamist can be baptized, and many of the younger men who have only one wife and have been baptized find themselves handicapped and have to suffer loss of social prestige. The wives of polygamists, however, may be received into the Church, for each woman has only one husband. It is not a satisfactory position, either for the women or for the Church, and it leaves unsolved the problem of creating a truly Christian home life. On the one hand, the Church of Christ must at all cost be kept pure ; on the other hand, we must be careful lest by unwise pressure we drive polygamy underground only to reappear in worse forms of sexual indulgence. Polygamy is preferable to prostitution. Probably the best course will be to work slowly and carefully ; to create a Christianized public opinion, and leave time to work the changes we desire. Unfortunately it is exceedingly difficult to get Africans to see that there is anything morally wrong in polygamy ; and it is pretty certain that not a few

African Christians, who for themselves loyally accept the rule of the Church, are nevertheless unconvinced that polygamy is really wrong in itself.

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It remains for us to ask what can be done for the transformation of the home. Along what lines can we work towards producing the home that is to be? It is a problem that can best be tackled simultaneously from all sides; and while Government can do something towards its solution, the Church of Christ can do still more. The most potent factors for the reformation of the home life are those that Government cannot control. Government may legislate with regard to things that are external; the Church can create influences that bear upon the inner life and produce *from within* changes that cannot be effected from without.

The Churches have in their hands large numbers of people who are more or less open to their influence and instruction. In Southern Nigeria, according to the last government census (1921) the African non-Roman Christians number 614,000, and the Roman Catholics 146,705. The former therefore are seven per cent of the population and the latter two per cent. The proportion of Christians may seem small, but it is a very important nucleus to work upon, and there has been a great increase since the census.[1] In the whole of Nigeria, the C.M.S. has a flock of 263,000

[1] The remainder are: five per cent Moslems, and eighty-six per cent pagan.

in its churches, of whom over 45,000 are communicants. If, by regular and systematic teaching and training, they can be led to grasp the fundamental principles of the Christian faith and way of life, they will be as leaven in the life of the country. Here then is a crying need—a *teaching ministry* in all the churches from the weakest to the strongest. What our West African Christians need is not so much nice sermons as definite instruction in the Christian life and the making of Christian homes. The Church has a unique opportunity. Sunday by Sunday most of these 263,000 people are in our churches to be taught, and great numbers on week-days also, and woe betide us if we fail to teach them.

Again, the Church has a unique opportunity through its schools. The C.M.S. has in Nigeria, 986 schools of various grades, and over 58,000 scholars and students. Think of the possibilities latent in those young people, the potential home-makers of to-morrow! In them we have an incalculable opportunity of influencing the life of the land. The great majority of these schools are of the village elementary type, and it is freely admitted that some of them are far from satisfactory; but there has been a great improvement in recent years, and the average standard of efficiency is steadily rising. The sphere of education is one in which the missions are working hand in hand with Government with very satisfactory results. Many C.M.S. schools are working under the government education code;

they are under the inspection of the department, and a few receive grants-in-aid in accordance with its regulations. The policy of the C.M.S. is loyally to work to the government programme as far as its resources allow.

Much more needs to be done for the education of girls. We have already mentioned the exceedingly valuable work that is being done by way of the training of brides and wives, and also the special schools for girls. In addition to these efforts, young girls attend many of the elementary schools and prove bright scholars. But they are few as compared with the boys ; and in most cases, owing to the marriage customs, they are taken away too soon. To deal effectively with the problems of the African home we must face up to an extension of all branches of education for girls.

Vocational and industrial education is of immense importance. The tendency is to devote too much attention to the literary side of education, with the result that the schools are turning out men who decide to be clerks in much greater numbers than the business houses and government offices can absorb, and this leads to great disappointment and even bitterness. We need to educate both boys and girls for village life and occupations, young people who will be content to remain in their native village or town and make their mark there, rather than crowd into Lagos to swell the already overcrowded ranks of clerks. The education must be so given that it will not de-nationalize ; and above all it

must be such as will tend to the making of good citizens, good Christians, and good home builders. Manual training and domestic economy are needed to this end. We must teach the boys how to make the home and the girls how to look after it.

The Church's plan is to work for the transformation of Nigerian home life (1) through the people in the churches, and (2) through the young people in the schools. All this means an adequate supply of trained workers, African clergy, catechists, and teachers (both men and women), for the brunt of the work must inevitably fall upon African shoulders. One of the biggest tasks before us is that of training of workers. St. Andrew's College and Awka College amply provide for the training of clergy for both dioceses. The provision for training catechists and teachers is good, but too limited to overtake the almost overwhelming needs of the ever-growing work. We have, in the preceding chapters, seen how important these subordinate workers are to the life and health of the Church ; we have seen how vitally important it is that they should be thoroughly trained, tested, and equipped. But we have to confess that the provision for such training is insufficient to meet the urgent needs of the situation. The need for training women teachers is especially urgent. Both St. Andrew's and Awka are training men, but so far the only possibility for training girl teachers has been by using the top form of a girls' school for the purpose. Both at Ibadan and St. Monica's this has been done with quite good

results. Now a forward step is being taken : the C.M.S. and the Wesleyan Mission are co-operating to run a United Normal School for girls in Ibadan. Girls will be sent up for normal training from the high and boarding schools of the two missions, and we have great hopes for the future.

Yet another step towards the transformation of the home life is a development of specialized women's work for women, not evangelistic work among the pagan women, but the training of the Christian women within the churches. There are large numbers of them in the congregations ; they are earnest and devout, but multitudes are painfully uninstructed. They listen to sermons and other forms of public instruction ; but they need much more than that. They need such instruction as only women can give them. They need trained women who can sit among them, women among women, and talk to them plainly and faithfully about the intimate things of a woman's life. That is what is needed if the Christian homes are to be what they should be. Such women's conferences as the one at Oyo should be multiplied, and all special work for women increased. In India and China, the missionary societies make great use of trained Bible women ; one wonders why there are none in West Africa. They would be invaluable.

Another thing that would tend to promote all-round progress would be the training of the responsible African laymen to play a still greater part in all forward movements. Already some of them

are rendering splendid service, but others are somewhat backward. It is not easy to see how advance can be brought about. The synods and the district councils provide them with opportunities of service, and perhaps will also prove a training ground for greater efficiency. The task before us calls for the united effort of every section of the Church, both African and European. Bishop Lasbrey writes: "We cannot sit still and be content to look back, however thankfully; *we have to plan for twenty years ahead.*"

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The task before us is a vast one, and a very sacred one. It is urgent; the forces now working in Nigeria, for good or evil, will not stand still. The tide of progress, of civilization, of commerce, will not wait upon our convenience. More can be accomplished in five years now than will be possible in ten years a generation ahead. Every one who really knows the African peoples, so capable, so devoted, so lovable, knows what immense possibilities for the future lie dormant in them. They surely have a great and valuable contribution to make to the general progress of mankind. All we do to help them to make that contribution will be repaid a hundredfold. The African churches are doing magnificently, but they need such help as we can give to develop their own resources. The tasks before us in Nigeria call for the united effort of the African churches and the Mission. In the days to come, the leadership must be more and more in the hands of the African Church and less and less in the hands of the mission.

Already that is the definite policy and the goal towards which all efforts tend, and matters have reached the stage at which we as a Mission, are no longer planning *for* the African but *with* him. By wisely directed co-operative efforts, aided by the Spirit of God, we shall see the extension of Christ's Kingdom in Nigeria.

This is no time to slacken our efforts. The door of opportunity stands wide open before us. The peoples of Nigeria, by their very needs, call us. The work still undone, and the work half-done, call us. The possibilities and promise of the future call us. And in these things, if we have ears to hear, we shall surely detect the voice of Christ Himself calling us to go forward in His Name.

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